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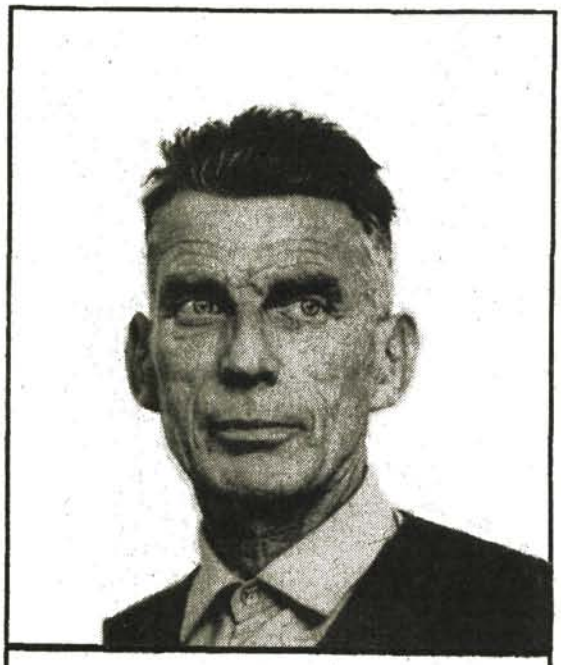

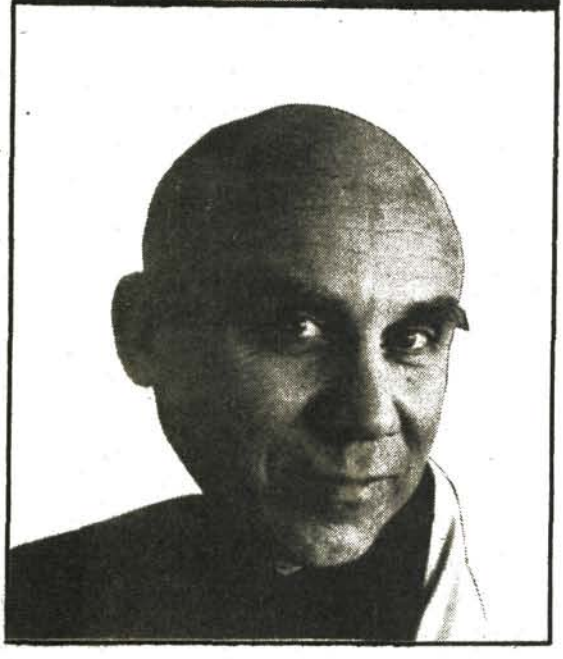

BECKETT & THOMAS MERTON

GRAHAM GREENE
HARVEY COX
FREDERIC CHOPIN
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BORN-AGAIN WRITERS

ARTICLES AND REVIEWS BY **VIVIAN MERCIER, JAMES T. BAKER, SAUL** **MARGO** **N,** **RVEY,** **NUS,** **WERS,**

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NEWS & VIEWS

Mexican Miter Dance

Bishop Sergio Mendez Arceo of Cuernavaca continues to be the hairshirt of the Mexican hierarchy.

Most recently he touched off debate with a statement made during a visit to Cuba which related Christianity and Marxism, and proposed that Marxism may provide a method of analysis which offers a useful interpretation of the situation of exploited people.

He suggested that the Church dialogue with Marxists and even use their "discourse" as it used Aristotelianism in a former age.

Adding spice to the sauce, Mendez Arceo termed Fidel Castro "fascinating," and expressed admiration for the work of the former Jesuit Porfirio Miranda, one of whose books is entitled *Marx and the Bible.*

The president of the Mexican Bishops' Conference, Cardinal Jose Salazar, voiced concern over the remarks in which Mendez Arceo openly affirmed "the need to resort to Marxist thought to bring about the Kingdom of God in our day."

Salazar said "the Gospel of the Lord is not tied to any ideology or economic system such as Marxism, whose view of man, history and society is incompatible with the Christian faith."

Bishop Luis Munive of Tlaxcala thereupon branded Mendez Arceo's admiration for Castro a mark of "the weakness of his Christian faith" and added that Mendez Arceo was trying to "conciliate what cannot be reconciled."

Obviously there is more to all this than a clash of personalities. Latinamerica Press, citing unnamed lay groups, attributes the attacks on Mendez Arceo in part to "fear" aroused in the hierarchy by a trend among Christians to sympathize with Marxism.

CENCOS—*Centro Nacional de Comunication Social*—relates the establishment's attacks to next October's Conference III of Latin American Bishops, scheduled for Puebla, Mexico.

CENCOS, which openly acknowledges that it is on the Christian left and in agreement with Mendez Arceo, claims the criticism is part of an effort to contain the "progressive" movement in the Mexican episcopacy—a movement that involves perhaps a dozen bishops—and to dismantle the "renewal" thrust that began with Conference II in Medellin.

Father Enrique Maza, a prominent Latin Jesuit, gives a similar interpretation. He believes the Puebla Conference will draw a "hard line" against Marxism and show "understanding" for "military dictatorships."

Straw Men

Chickens still come home to roost.

For years Catholic Church officials routinely bought property for developing dioceses, parishes, religious orders through a "straw"—a dummy purchaser. It was the way of the secular corporation, but if it was deceptive, it was also pragmatic. It was a means of controlling asking price; in some instances it was a means of getting property that otherwise might not be available for any number of reasons, including religious prejudice. Also, churches build parking lots, draw crowds, etc.; not every neighborhood wants 'em. The straw man helped the church to get onto the block.

The tables were turned recently in the case of Mount St. Michael's, a former Jesuit house of studies near Spokane, Washington. To the Jesuits' embarrassment, the property has turned up in the hands of St. Joseph Tridentine Latin Rite Church, an ultraconservative group headquartered in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. How? Through a "straw," the Pillar Investment Corporation.

According to *National Jesuit News,* the four known members of Pillar Investment Corporation all have close ties with the Tridentine Church, also known as the Fatima Crusaders or Our Lady of Fatima Crusade.

The *News* cites a former member of the movement as saying the Pillar company was formed to buy Mount St. Michael's "because they knew that the Jesuits would not sell their property to the Crusaders."

The president of Pillar denies the allegation, but I can believe it. I've seen the system at work.

So the Jesuits are embarrassed. But any pain is relieved, no doubt, by the money that exchanged hands. The Jesuits got $1.5 million for Mount St. Michael's.

A Dish of Crow

The hard-hat Bishop of Belfast, William Philbin has received a knock on the miter from headquarters.

A while back Bishop Philbin refused confirmation to children attending state schools, on the grounds that religious instruction outside Catholic schools was inadequate for proper reception of the sacrament.

There was a hullabaloo in Northern Ireland; Protestant extremists seized on Philbin's intransigence as justification for intransigence of their own.

The Vatican sought out submissions from the Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Gaetano Alibrandi, and the new Irish Primate, Archbishop Tomas O. Fiaich of Armagh, then let Philbin know that there was "insufficient reason" in Canon Law for him to refuse the confirmations.

Philbin altered his attitude.

SCEF/LNS

Tobit or Not Tobit

The ruling military junta in Ethiopia has placed the Gospel according to St. Mark and the Old Testament Book of Tobit on its index of banned books. Also banned: an anthology of biblical quotations published by the Coptic Church; Dante's *Divine Comedy,* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet.* The junta's reasoning: the contents are irreconcilable with the philosophy of Revolution.

Odds and Ends

—Talk about wordfowling with a blunderbuss; catch the head on the *New York Times*'s lead editorial for March 30: "The Virtues of the Neutron Bomb." Mrs. Malaprop could have written that. *Virtues,* yet. And Mr. Contretemps, allowing a personification, could have arranged the timing almost. Five days later the *Times* was reporting that President Carter had decided against producing the neutron bomb. That's where use of the word virtue belonged. Carter's was an admirably prudent decision. Prudence, remember, is one of the four cardinal virtues. Not virtuous was his subsequent waffling on the issue.

JOHN DEEDY

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CORRESPONDENCE

Christian Concerns

Logansport, Ind.

To the Editors: My compliments to the drafters of the Chicago Declaration of Christian Concern and to *Commonweal* for presenting the symposium on this important paper [Feb. 17].

In the Fall of 1975 I participated in the Listening Process in the Diocesan Council and as a chairman at the parish level. This Process was to hear and define the needs and concerns of the laity. In March of 1976 I attended the follow-up Indiana Catholic Conference at Notre Dame as a consultant.

The final step in the Listening Process, I presumed, was the Detroit Call to Action, but a funny thing happened on the way to the action. The big stories that came out of Detroit carried nothing that reflected the needs of the laity that I had heard discussed on a local or state level. I was frustrated but presumed that was caused by (a) the media's zeroing in on what they considered "hot" items, namely optional celibacy and women's ministry or (b) possibly skewing of the results by more sophisticated parishes.

The Chicago Declaration shares and illumines my concern. I can't say that I feel betrayed, since that word implies a deliberate plot to thwart justice, but frankly, I would almost prefer betrayal to the state of being ignored.

Oh, gamesmanship, where is thy sting.

BILL MCTAGGART

Incarnation Myths

Wausau, Wis.

To the Editors: After reading Herbert McCabe's article, "Is the Incarnation a Myth?" [Mar. 1], in rebuttal to the book, *The Myth of God Incarnate*, I can't help but wonder if theologians don't make things unnecessarily complicated.

Based on present-day understanding of how necessary being loved is to

(*Continued on page 285*)

NEWS & VIEWS: 258 **CORRESPONDENCE: 259**
EDITORIALS: 259
WASHINGTON REPORT: The City Delivered?: *Frank Getlein* **260**
SOLIDARITY IN ITALY: *Margo Hammond* **263**
DEFEAT FOR THE MINERS: *David Bensman* **263**
SAMUEL BECKETT, BIBLE READER: *Vivian Mercier* **266**
MERTON ON THE MOVE: *James T. Baker* **269**
PRESS: What Is Begin Up To?: *Thomas Powers* **272**
VERSE: *Nancy Peters* **265**
THE SCREEN: Sob Sisters: *Colin L. Westerbeck, Jr.* **274**
LITERATURE BEHIND BARS: *Saul Maloff* **277**
THE HEART OF THE FACTOR: *Gerard Reedy* **279**
RELIGIOUS PUBLISHING: *John Garvey* **282**
BOOKS: *Michael True, Roy Chernus, John B. Sheerin* **281**
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MR. CARTER'S URBAN PLAN

Those concerned with America's cities have been waiting with considerable trepidation for President Carter's urban program to be unveiled. Rumors on the amount of money involved ranged from the grandiose to the downright niggardly. Now the President's proposals have been put forward, and the operation is typical of Jimmy Carter, neither grandiose nor outright niggardly, calculated to offend as few people as possible and designed to win at least grudging acquiescence from most. So far that is about the reaction the urban program is receiving around the country.

Mr. Carter's plan involves a broad series of job programs, tax incentives, grants, public works, loan guarantees and a sweeping "retargeting" of many federal programs to achieve recovery of the nation's ailing cities. New initiatives are provided, including a "national development bank" to promote industrial development in depressed areas and a plan to encourage states to aid distressed cities within their borders. Not much money is immediately involved. There is talk of an $8 billion plan, but that figure includes loan guarantees and in fact only $742 million would be spent in the next fiscal year. The main idea, administration sources insist, is not so much to provide large sums of money but to bring some coherence to the billions the U.S. already provides for states and cities. Mr. Carter is proposing more than 160 changes in 38 existing federal programs to make them more responsive to the needs of blacks and the poor in general. Thus government purchases from minority businesses would be substantially increased. The emphasis is on aid to the cities rather than to the suburbs, with stress on rehabilitation of existing water and sewer

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lines, for example, rather than in creating new suburban systems. "The deterioration of urban life in the United States is one of the most complex and deeply rooted problems of our age," said Mr. Carter. "The federal government has the clear duty to lead the effort to reverse that deterioration."

Reactions to the new plan varied. There was little or no outright enthusiasm, with most responses ranging from tempered approval to downright disappointment. The U.S. Conference of Mayors called the Carter proposal a "significant step in the right direction," while expressing disappointment at the level of support for housing, transportation and other urban needs. Vernon E. Jordan, Jr., head of the National Urban League, called the plan "disheartening" and said it "falls far short of being the domestic urban Marshall Plan the nation needs."

In replying to criticism on the small amount of money called for in the new urban plan, administration officials stressed that money was not the important point; what was important, they maintained, is that this represents the first explicit commitment by President Carter, with his rural background, to conserve cities and discourage suburban sprawl. What the plan promises, they say, is a "New Partnership" between federal government and individuals bent on saving the cities.

There are many useful features in the Carter urban plan. There is, for instance, a particularly valuable one which provides tax incentives for businesses that will hire unemployed ghetto youth. These and other new ideas in the program, such as the development bank to promote aid to distressed urban regions, are well worth fighting for, and a fight will probably be necessary when the time comes for Congress to take up the urban proposals. Whatever action Congress takes should clearly be in the direction of expanding and strengthening Mr. Carter's proposals, not in cutting them back. As the plan now stands, it has worthwhile features, but the most that can honestly be said for it is that it is a good first step, and this in an area where what is needed is not a good first step but a great leap.

COMING

HAROLD F. BREIMYER writes about the farmers' strike, plight and prospects:

"In the winter of 1977-78, a sizable number of farmers declared that without a promise of 'parity' they would 'strike.' . . . Farmers' unrest and demonstrations are by no means new. They are as old as the Whiskey Rebellion of 1794. Never before, though, has the industrial term of a strike been borrowed. If the 1794 event was rebellion, in the early 1930s farmers staged a 'holiday movement,' and in the later 1950s and 1960s Oren Lee Staley led his National Farmers Organization into 'holding actions.' "

WASHINGTON REPORT

THE CITY DELIVERED?

The *New York Times* lead editorial on the administration's new, first-ever National Urban Policy summed it up in a headline which raises interesting questions even as it answers the basic one: the new policy is, said the *Times*, "Sound but modest."

That opinion was widely shared, but it suggests a couple of assumptions not necessarily in the mind of the headline writer nor even in that of the editorial writer. If the policy is sound and modest, then the urban situation needed but a modest policy in order to have a sound policy. Perhaps even: anything more than modest would have been unsound. Another interpretation is that the policy is sound as far as it goes, but would become even sounder if it were less modest.

The mayors of America would undoubtedly have preferred something a little less modest and there is ample reason to believe there are a lot of people out there who would have preferred even more modesty if necessary at the cost of less soundness. The country's most influential suburban paper, for instance, Long Island's *Newsday*, senses sharpened by a special readership different from that of the *Times*, headed the story "President's National Urban Policy called 'Disaster' for Suburbs" and said in the lead that the new Urban Policy had "a clear message for the suburbs: the years of federally encouraged suburban growth are over."

Taken all in all, you have to hand the palm to *Newsday* as getting closer to what the Urban Policy is all about than the *Times*. The figures for new expenditures in the Carter set of papers are indeed modest, but the implications are far-reaching. *Newsday* went right to them. The free ride for suburbs is—at least potentially—over. To say the Urban Policy means anything is a little premature, because the President's expressions of good wishes for cities have not yet been translated into proposed legislation. When they are so translated, they will be sent to Congress and assigned to, probably, at least two or three committees in both Houses. This means there is very little realistic chance of final legislation on Urban Policy getting framed, recommended,

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passed, compromised, repassed and signed into law by the end of the 95th Congress, now scheduled for the end of August.

Against such modest short-term hopes, the long-term soundness of the Policy is its recognition of a handful of facts never yet universally acknowledged in our recent domestic history. It has indeed been universally recognized that many of our cities are on the rocks, particularly those in the Northeast and Midwest, the Snowbelt, as it has been called in distinction from the Sunbelt. Industries have fled the Snowbelt into the Sunbelt for, it has been felt, sensible reasons: cheap, non-union labor in states which have traditionally and effectively discouraged union organization, the climate, the decaying state of the older cities with their welfare burdens and rising crime, declining school systems, declining tax base, increasing demand for social services and so on and so on.

All of this, however, did not by any means take place just by some kind of natural law working itself out. Much of it took place as the result, inadvertent for the most part, of the application of a wide assortment of government programs having assorted other things in mind.

Item: following World War II, the nation was seized with the idea that, Hitler defeated, every American, but especially every American who had fought against the monster, was entitled to a home of his own, with financing backed by the government. In translating this idea to reality, the idea shifted subtly to every American was entitled to a *new* home of his own federally financed. City land being mostly already occupied, this alone would have accounted for the suburban growth of the last thirty years, but there was more:

Item: Hitler having invented the autobahn system and Americans abroad having observed it, it was determined that such a system of highways would make the coast-to-coast defense of the country ever so much easier and so that, too, was undertaken. The new highways greatly aided the growth of the suburbs, making motor access to them on the basis of one-car-one-rider infinitely more comfortable and convenient than any existing or planned public transportation. At the same time, the new highways amounted to federal subsidy of the trucking industry, with consequent deterioration of the rail system, deterioration of central city industry grouped around railheads, the springing into being of suburban warehouse systems and, by easy stages, of new suburban industrial "parks," which were greatly encouraged by:

Item: tax advantages for new commercial and industrial construction, which, naturally, could be undertaken much more advantageously in somebody's cow pasture than downtown.

And that's not the half of it.

In short, the federal government and the federal treasury have been skewed against the American city for the last thirty-plus years. The Carter Urban Policy, if it did nothing else, would merit praise simply for its recognition of the history of suburban boosterism and its devastating effects on cities. That recognition is behind the shiver in the *Newsday* headline.

There are exceptions. There are metropolitan areas here and there across the country. But the root pattern is that the upwardly mobile in our urban societies have also been the outwardly mobile, in part at least because they recognized a good deal when they saw one, including good deals underwritten by federal laws. Again granted exceptions, suburbs are preselected populations of winners in the urban race; those left behind have been the losers. The city has continued to produce all or most of the income in a given metropolitan area but the winners have carried it off to the suburbs to pay taxes for superior schools, police, fire and other forms of protection and life-enhancement, leaving the losers in the under-financed, decaying central cities. To accept all this as simply the natural course of history or something is to ignore the positive tax-breaks and exemptions the federal government has systematically provided for suburbs, systematically denied to the cities that produced the wealth of the whole area.

The antagonism between city and suburb is hardly the only one highlighted by the new Urban Policy. Even the assumed conflict between Snowbelt and Sunbelt will be resolved eventually as unions catch up with the decampers and as sunbelters demand the urban amenities that make municipal life in the North so expensive. Of much more immediate interest is the conflict between cities and states that goes back to the days when, in most states, cows and haystacks had better representation in state governments than did the human residents of the cities. There is also a relatively new conflict between City Hall and neighborhood leaders, the latter hardly recognized in formal political structures at all, yet already wielding political power and now demanding to be treated by the Feds on terms of equality, even better than equality, with the cities. If the Urban Policy does get itself condensed into law and the law dealt out for enforcement with appropriate agencies, we shall be in for some interesting times.

At a less lofty level than that of structural analysis and historical change, the handling of the Policy by the administration was, alas, another example, of clumsy ineptitude in all directions. To begin with the announcement was put off and put off and put off until it came four days after Congress adjourned for the Easter recess, as it used to be called, and one day before the President took off on the trip to South America and Africa. This meant the announcement fell into a double void, with neither response nor follow-through and a general air of ho-hum. The congressional briefing was abruptly canceled on the transparently false excuse of

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the dread Middle East crisis, which turned out to be last-minute disagreements within the administration. The congressional staff briefing, billed as featuring Stuart Eizenstadt, the presumed impressario, featured instead, with no advance notice, Bert Karp, an underling. At the business and industrial briefing, the representative of a leading motor company, inquiring for clarification on the $200 million city contest feature, got contradictory answers from Eizenstadt and another White House aide, Jack Watson. And so it went. One highly relevant staffer said it seemed to her the White House staff was saying, Well, you wanted an Urban Policy, here it is, please take it and go away.

FRANK GETLEIN

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THE MORO KIDNAPPING

SOLIDARITY IN ITALY

"It's difficult not to love this country and its people," wrote *Il Manifesto* the day after the kidnapping of Christian Democratic leader Aldo Moro and the killing of his five bodyguards in broad daylight on a side street in northern Rome. The far left daily was referring to the spontaneous reaction of the vast majority of Italians on hearing the news of the latest Brigate Rosse (Red Brigades) attack: hundreds of thousands of workers immediately staged a general strike to express their disgust and indignation. Thousands of citizens across the peninsula filled the streets and piazzas to protest the terrorists' action.

For months the situation in Italy has been described as desperate: unemployment is soaring; crime is on the rise; the justice system is in shambles. The trial in Catanzaro for those accused of planting a bomb in 1969 in a Milan bank killing dozens of people, a trial that has implicated the Italian secret service and high-ranking politicians, has dragged on for eight years with no end in sight. The people of Belice in Sicily whose homes were devastated by an earthquake in 1968 are still after 10 years living in shacks while the money that had been collected on their behalf has found its way into politicians' pockets. Scandals involving top state officials—from the Lockheed "bustarelle" (bribes) to the Montedison payoffs—have become so frequent that they barely make front-page news anymore.

One could imagine that this last decade of violence, political corruption and economic misery could have won over, if not recruits for the Brigate Rosse, at least sympathizers.

Instead when the Brigate Rosse kidnapped Aldo Moro, who is after all the symbol par excellence of these past 30 years of inefficient government, the reaction was swift and clear: *Basta con il terrorismo* (Down with terrorism). In Rome alone over 200,000, organized by the united trade union federation, gathered in Piazza San Giovanni the night of the kidnapping. Other demonstrations were held across Italy—thousands demonstrating their solidarity for a party and a man who, for the majority of the demonstrators, are the symbols of Italy's problems for the past three decades. But for now Aldo Moro—whose byzantine speeches and role as the Great Compromiser within the Christian Democratic Party had just a week before ended one of the longest governmental crises in Italian history—had become the symbol of an attack on the country's democratic institutions, an attack on democracy. He had become also the symbol of a government that for the first time in 30 years includes the Communists.

"The people have understood well why the Brigate Rosse wanted to strike at this man and on the very day when a new majority—which is determined to confront this country's emergency situation—was being formed in Parliament," commented *L'Unità*, the Communist party organ.

That new majority—in addition to including the Communist Party which represents more than a third of the Italian electorate—is the largest consensus ever gathered by an Italian government in the republic's history. Like the *grosse Koalition* in West Germany in 1969, the new Italian government—which received its vote of confidence in record-breaking time following the Moro kidnapping—leaves a tiny minority in the opposition (a little over 6 percent including two small parties on the left— *Democrazia Proletaria* and the Radicals—and two small right-wing parties—the Liberals and the neo-Fascists). Also like the *grosse Koalition*, such a widely supported government carries with it an inherent danger: without a coherent democratic opposition to voice their dissent, the emarginated groups tend to move to the extremes and to turn to undemocratic methods. In 1969 in West Germany, in fact, the neo-Nazi party (NPD) rose to nearly 4 percent and during the same period the Baader-Meinhof group first appeared.

Already in Italy the Communist Party's move toward the area of government has been accompanied by an increase in political violence. In the first two months of 1978 fifty new extremist groups appeared claiming responsibility for terrorist acts bringing the total to

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66. In 1975, 702 terrorist attacks were recorded. In 1976 that figure rose to 1198 and in 1977 the terrorists struck 2128, the record for any Western society. Some claim to be right-wing groups. Others—like the Brigate Rosse of Renato Curcio and his wife Margherita Cagol (killed in a police ambush) who were once militants in a Catholic group (They have transferred the absolute value of their religious faith, commented journalist Alberto Ronchey, into a sacralization of the class struggle)—insist on their left-wing matrix.

The public denunciation of these acts of violence has not always been as unanimous as the reaction to the Moro kidnapping seems to have been. When Publio Fiori, a local Christian Democratic leader, was shot in the legs by the Brigate Rosse last November, a group of Roman high school students applauded on hearing the news. When Carlo Casalegno, vice-director of *La Stampa*, the Turin daily owned by FIAT, was killed by the Brigate Rosse, hundreds of workers at the automobile factory refused to go out on strike to protest. Even the petition against terrorism circulated in Turin on the eve of the Brigate Rosse trial in the Piedmontese capital was not as successful as foreseen.

The trial of 49 Brigatisti including the group's charismatic leader Renato Curcio, which opened March 9 despite the killing of a judge in Rome and a police officer in Turin a few days before, was almost postponed for the third time because a jury could not be set up. Dozens of citizens refused to serve on the jury. Fear? Indifference? According to Sicilian writer Leonardo Sciascia (who several months ago resigned as city alderman in Palermo after being elected on the Communist Party ticket) the refusal to accept jury duty was comprehensible. For many, he argued, the Italian state is not a state worth defending.

Now, however, tens of thousands of Italians have voiced their willingness to defend the Italian state. Citizens— including the general secretary of the Radical Party, Adelaide Aglietta, who was picked at random for jury duty—have stepped forward in Turin to form a jury in the Brigate Rosse trial despite threats by that group on their lives. Perhaps it is true, as Sciascia contends, that these actions are not so much a vote of confidence in the State as in the Communist Party whose presence in the government offers to many the only hope left after 30 years of political inaction. It is, at any rate, a vote for democracy.

If this vote is betrayed—if the presence of the Communist Party in the governmental majority does not serve to end the political stalemate that has lasted three decades—the peninsula's political leaders risk providing the Brigate Rosse and other such terrorist groups with the consensus they now lack.

"Terrorism grows like grass in the ruins and you have created this ruin," Sciascia warned the Christian Democrats. "What is to be feared is that if the crisis and desperation continue to increase, so will the consensus toward terrorist actions." MARGO HAMMOND

(*Margo Hammond, a frequent contributor, is an American journalist based in Rome.*)

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UMW STRIKE

DEFEAT FOR THE MINERS

After a display of extraordinary solidarity, soft coal miners voted on March 24 to return to work. For 110 days they withstood terrible pressures, from the Bituminous Coal Operators Association, from the courts and from the United States government. No other group of workers could have done what the miners did.

Their strike stirred workers throughout the country. In a memorable gesture of solidarity, the UAW and the Steelworkers union donated $3 million to the miners' cause. In Boston, "conservative" trade union leaders joined with assorted left-wing activists to pay tribute to the miners' heroism.

Yet there can be little doubt that the final settlement approved by 57 percent of the miners' electorate represented a serious defeat for the UMW, and ultimately for American labor. Now the union faces a forbidding future discouraged and divided.

This is no requiem for a valiant army. The miners retain unmatched resources to survive and renew their organization. But it will take long and hard effort to recoup this loss.

The March 24 agreement represented a major setback because it surrendered the UMW's 30-year-old independently administered health insurance program. The program was John L. Lewis's legacy, the symbol of the union's power; moreover, it had improved health care in Appalachia dramatically, by attracting to the area public-health-oriented doctors who shook up the local medical establishment. The replacement of the union's health plan by operator-sponsored private insurance carriers symbolizes the UMW's loss of independence.

Furthermore, the miners viewed the 1978 settlement as a defeat because the contract did not contain the priority demands established by the union at the 1976 pre-bargaining convention. Sought-for improve-

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ments in the areas of grievance handling, arbitration and safety, for example, simply did not appear in the supposedly "sweeter" third contract.

Moreover, the miners did not view the pay hike of 39 percent over three years as sufficient to compensate for the contract's deficiencies. They viewed the wage increase as their just due, but no victory. Every miner I talked to told me that the extra dollars would simply go to pay income taxes, social security, local road-maintenance levies, utility bills and general inflation costs. While the rest of the country drooled over the miners' wages, while the business press lamented the settlement's likely influence on future inflation, the miners themselves believed the contract gave them nothing.

Thus the miners did not settle because they found the contract sweet. In part, they returned to work because of financial pressure—many could not pay their utility and phone bills, their auto payments, the installments on their trailers. I do not believe this was the primary reason. More important was that a majority of the workers became discouraged, lost confidence in their union leadership's and their own ability to win against determined employer opposition.

Why did the coal operators triumph? The new economics of the coal industry are an important part of the answer.

In 1974, when the UMW and the Bituminous Coal Operators Association signed their last agreement, UMW miners produced 70 percent of the nation's coal. Today the figure is down to 50 percent. During the strike, non-union mines, primarily in Eastern Kentucky and the Western coalfields, produced 60 percent of the nation's normal demand for coal. For the first time since the advent of John L. Lewis, the UMW had lost its ability to cripple the American economy.

A second reason for the miners' defeat lay in the coal operators' fierce determination to cripple the UMW. In the past, the Bituminous Coal Operators Association had welcomed a strong union, seeing in it a partner in the stabilization of coal prices and production. Now the coal companies have changed tack. For one thing, they see the union's leadership as weak. In addition, they foresee rising coal prices, as the nation becomes more heavily dependent on coal. Furthermore, the operators now employ expensive and awesomely productive machines of many kinds; they believe the union miners will never allow that machinery to do all the work it can. Finally, the recent wave of wildcat strikes in the mines has convinced many operators that the UMW can no longer play its role in stabilizing production. (Of course, many wildcats were responses to employer provocations.)

A third cause of the mineworkers' defeat was the behavior of the Carter administration. The President's statement that collective bargaining should be allowed to run its course was fine, but his actions were not. Invoking Taft-Hartley in a phony emergency played right into the operators' hands. Moreover, the President's insistence, after the second contract was defeated, that the negotiators reach an immediate settlement proved a bad policy. Working under the gun, the negotiators did not write a wholly new contract addressing the rank-and-file's goals and grievances. Instead, it barely improved the contract miners rejected 2-1, guaranteeing continued dissatisfaction, and most likely, continued turmoil.

When all this is said, a major portion of blame for the strike's defeat must rest with the union. At the top, its leadership was embarrassingly weak. Pres. Miller's inexplicable decision to submit the first contract to the UMW's bargaining council severely undermined the union's position. By the time the third contract came along, it looked like an improvement, despite the fact that it contained so little of what the miners really wanted.

The weakness of the UMW leadership stems directly from the union's past. John L. Lewis was a magnificent leader but a dictator nonetheless. Under his reign, all power in the union was concentrated in one

man. Local leaders who gained their own followings or challenged Lewis's policy were summarily removed from office. There was no chance for UMW officials to learn the ways of union politics or industrial relations. When Yablonski was murdered by Tony Boyle and his gang, the union reformers turned to Arnold Miller, a man with no previous experience as a trade union officer. From the presidency down, UMW officials lack the experience and competence of their counterparts in many other unions.

Such are the growing pains of a young democracy. In time they can be overcome. But in the meantime, they are compounded by the fact that the UMW membership itself is new, young and inexperienced.

During the 1950's, the coal industry mechanized, with Lewis's help. At the same time, it contracted, as the nation switched to oil and natural gas as its primary sources of energy. When the Arab oil boycott changed things so dramatically in 1973, and the coalfields boomed once more, a whole new generation of Appalachians—many who had moved with their

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parents to Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland and other northern cities—entered the coal fields.

Now there is a generation gap. Most miners are under thirty or over 45. Most of those over 45 had been retained by the coal companies because they were good workers. In a period of mass layoffs, they had learned to work hard and ask few questions as the price of keeping their jobs. Now they are joined by youngsters from a different generation, who have not known the fear and poverty of the recent past, who have experienced the high wages and uninterrupted expansion of a boom era. It is an unstable mixture. The older men were not allowed by Lewis to develop leadership skills; the younger men have not had time to learn them fully.

Having looked at the troubled past, what of the future? There is more bad news. George Hopkins, a UMW Board member from eastern Kentucky's District 30 predicts that the UMW will be unable to recruit new members in the next three years under the March 24 contract. According to Hopkins, the contract gives the union nothing to organize with. The non-union operators have already boosted their employees' wages to match the UMW gains.

This view was shared widely by West Virginia miners I interviewed. And if it is correct, the UMW may well go into its 1980 negotiations with only one-third of the nation's coal produced by union miners. No wonder Hopkins says, "I most certainly believe the future of the union is in serious jeopardy."

Moreover, there is little reason to believe the turmoil in the coal fields will soon come to an end. The current contract provides no solution to the problem. The cumbersome grievance machinery, a major source of the miners' complaints, remains unchanged. And we can expect to see serious trouble if the employers attempt to exercise their right, under "Decision 108" of the Arbitration Review Board, to fire miners who wildcat and attempt to shut down the mines. If miners are fired for striking, as seems likely, their fellows will no doubt strike to support them, and production will come to a halt amidst great bitterness.

For the miners to surmount their problems, there will have to be a movement for renewal. Right now none is in the offing. Anti-Miller sentiment is widespread and profound, but lacks organization and leadership. The attempt to recall Miller will not succeed, because constitutional provisions for recall are unworkable. And if Miller survives, to run for re-election, it is unclear at present who will challenge him.

Of course, there is good news too. The miners' extraordinary self-reliance and solidarity are resources which can be used to create a new and stronger union. A new generation of leaders, something the soft coal fields have lacked for 50 years, is emerging, and will soon make itself felt.

In the 1930s, the UMW sparked labor's resurgence. Six years ago, miners electrified the labor movement by deposing a corrupt and incompetent leadership. This winter, they inspired us again with their fierce determination. Somehow it is hard to believe they will not rise from defeat.

DAVID BENSMAN

(David Bensman teaches labor history at Baruch College, City University of New York.)

NANCY PETERS

NEW SCENT

If you are one of those
who can take the world or leave it,
most likely you will leave it.
On any warm day you'll stay inside
and look out the window occasionally
to not miss the final show of tulips
before they close down for the night.

But if you are one who needs to roam
close to home on a rainy day,
and walk in awe of such a rain,
and go so far as to note where the pheasant
spent the night, or the time the four
o'clocks closed, then you might be close
to begin in love with the world
as it is, breathing, taking the new growth
of the blue spruce as a sign newly sent.

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SAMUEL BECKETT, BIBLE READER

VIVIAN MERCIER

Despite loss of faith, he has exploited his Protestant heritage

Samuel Beckett, according to his own account, "soon lost faith." He told Harold Hobson, "I don't think I ever had it after leaving Trinity [College, Dublin]." Perhaps because his father was not religious, Beckett seems to have felt no anguish in turning away from the Anglican beliefs of his youth; his mother, on the other hand, was deeply religious in a rather narrow evangelical way. Loss of faith, however, clearly has not prevented him from exploiting his Protestant heritage, any more than it prevented James Joyce from exploiting his Catholic one. Beckett told Colin Duckworth, "Christianity is a mythology with which I am perfectly familiar, so I naturally use it." He might well have added that he is also familiar with the Authorized (King James) Version of the Bible, the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, and the Irish Church Hymnal, all of which he frequently quotes in his works without acknowledgement.

A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man has made millions of readers aware of the thoroughness of Joyce's Catholic education under the Jesuits. It is not generally known, however, that Beckett's Anglican training was almost as thorough. The religious education he received at his mother's knee is vividly dramatized by the famous photograph of him kneeling to pray there at an early age. His years from four to nearly fourteen doubtless saw little slackening in that training, and the ensuing three-and-a-half years as a boarder at Portora Royal School, Enniskillen, Northern Ireland, unquestionably subjected him to a sternly evangelical regime. Founded by none other than the King James I of England who gave his "special command" for the famous Bible translation, Portora has usually had a Church of Ireland clergyman as Headmaster. Throughout Beckett's and my time there, the post was held by the Rev. Edward Gilbert Seale, who—unlike some of his eighteenth-century predecessors—was devout, conscientious, and a demanding teacher of Latin and Greek.

Every weekday morning, Seale read prayers and a portion of Holy Scripture at Assembly. He or some other master read prayers and Scripture again at the end of homework preparation in the evening. The roll call before breakfast was also followed by a brief prayer, read by the master on duty. On Sunday mornings the Anglican boarders paraded to Enniskillen Cathedral, wearing Harrow-style straw boaters if the weather was suitable; I, like Beckett before me, took part in this ritual.

On Sunday evenings in summer, we walked to church again in the country parish of Rossory; the rest of the year, Sunday evening service was in the Dining Hall, usually conducted by the Headmaster. Occasionally there would be a missionary sermon by an "old boy" (alumnus) who was already laboring in the vineyard, whether in the British colonies or the slums of Belfast. We used the *Public Schools Hymnal,* bound in the school colors—the British royal arms in yellow on a black ground. Its biographical notes told us that Henry Francis Lyte, author of "Abide with me" and other fine hymns, was educated at Portora and Trinity. We liked the many hymns at these services and made a specially "joyful noise" with Lyte's. More important for Beckett, I imagine, than all this liturgy was the almost daily teaching of Holy Scripture as a regular school

VIVIAN MERCIER *is Professor of English at the University of California, Santa Barbara. His critical study* Beckett/Beckett *has recently been published by Oxford.*

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subject at every level, except perhaps the Sixth Form (senior class).

One is probably safe in assuming that Beckett took at least one public examination in religious knowledge, because of a cryptic reference in *More Pricks Than Kicks* (1934). Belacqua Shuah "had underlined, as quite a callow boy, a phrase in Hardy's Tess, won by dint of cogging in the Synod. . . ." Thomas Hardy's novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is undoubtedly meant, but what is "cogging in the Synod"? Looking up the individual words in any standard dictionary will only compound confusion, yet the expression is crystal-clear to an Irish Episcopalian. It refers to an annual examination in religious knowledge inaugurated about a century ago by the Board of Education of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland. Even if Beckett, like his surrogate Shuah, had in fact done a spot of "cogging" (the Portora word for copying or plagiarizing), it seems highly unlikely that he could have won a novel by that notorious agnostic/atheist Thomas Hardy as a prize in such an examination!

One could argue that all his Portora religious training was wasted on Beckett because he lost his faith soon after leaving the school. I believe, on the contrary, that it reinforced his earlier upbringing in certain ways and helps to explain why, at different stages of his literary development, different aspects of his religious heritage come to the fore. One thing at least is certain: there is *no* stage of that development which does not possess a religious dimension. Much has been written by critics about the influence of Dante on Beckett's writing, but surely it is most unlikely that he would have become susceptible to that influence at Trinity if he had not first received such a thorough grounding in the Bible?

It was natural, given his loss of faith, that Beckett's early works should treat his religious heritage with self-conscious irony. We have seen something of this already in *More Pricks Than Kicks*. His next important work, *Murphy*, a novel published in 1938, is positively sly in its biblical allusions. Take this passage, for example:

> "I greatly fear," said Wylie, "that the syndrome known as life is too diffuse to admit of palliation. For every symptom that is eased, another is made worse. The horse leech's daughter is a closed system. Her quantum of wantum cannot vary."

The idea of life as a syndrome made up of innumerable symptoms is clear enough, but who is "the horse leech's daughter"? In Proverbs (30:15), we read, "The horseleech hath two daughters, crying, Give, Give." Although "horseleech" could mean "veterinarian" when the King James was written, the horseleech referred to is a large bloodsucker. Clearly the proverb stuck in Beckett's mind because of the oddity of its expression and its quaint image of insatiable desire.

In the same chapter of *Murphy* he uses a more familiar quotation in the same disrespectful style. On learning that all the bars in Dublin are closed for the "holy hour" between 2:30 and 3:30 p.m., Wylie's friend Neary "leaned against the . . . railings and cursed, first the day in which he was born, then—in a bold flash-back—the night in which he was conceived." No hint is given that these were not original remarks, but I need hardly refer readers to the Book of Job (3:3) "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, there is a man child conceived."

Confrontation

Obviously quotations like these do not take the Bible or its message very seriously: Job's cry of utter despair has nothing in common with the temporary inconvenience being undergone by Neary. It is not until after World War II that Beckett confronts the basic teachings of Christianity in his work. At first sight, this confrontation may be mistaken for a total denial and rejection. One could quote, for example, the notorious line from *Endgame*. Hamm, Clov and Nagg pray silently to God; they are disappointed when they get no response; Hamm shouts, "The bastard! He doesn't exist!" (Clov answers, "Not yet.") This blasphemy affirms God's existence even in denying it: how can He be a bastard (or *un salaud*, as the French put it) if He doesn't exist? *All That Fall* takes a bleaker view: after Mrs. Rooney quotes "The Lord upholdeth all that fall . . . ," (Psalm 145 in the King James—144 in the Vulgate) she and her husband *"join in wild laughter."* God does exist, they imply, but He never intervenes in the workings of His universe.

Yet the meaning of Beckett's first play, *Waiting for Godot*, is deeply ambiguous. Beckett has remarked that if he knew who or what Godot is, he would have said so in the play, but it certainly can be read as a play about waiting for God, or the Revolution, or the Millennium: although Godot seems not to come, who is to say that he won't turn up tomorrow? I myself have suggested more than once that Pozzo is in fact Godot, and therefore Godot arrives in both acts without being recognized. The first time, he is rather cruel, like the God of the Old Testament. In the second act, he is blind and long-suffering, almost Christlike. At the end of Act Two and of the play, Didi and Gogo are still waiting, like Jews expecting the Messiah, or Christians awaiting the Second Coming. One of the great ironies of the New Testament, from the Christian point of view, is that Jesus was not recognized as the Messiah by most of the Jews he came to save. Christians are also warned that the Second Coming of Christ may be as stealthy as "a thief in the night." *Waiting for Godot* suggests that when the Savior comes he is never

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recognized, but this is perhaps less depressing than the idea that he does not care enough for us to come at all.

After mockery and serious confrontation there comes the third stage of religious influence upon Beckett's literary development, dating from the publication of *Comment c'est* in 1961 (translated as *How It Is*, 1964). Beckett has given up wrestling with the angel: instead of continuing his love/hate relationship with Christianity, he is now writing a sort of Scripture of his own. Perhaps *every* great writer longs to write a sacred book: the late Herbert Howarth, in his brilliant book *The Irish Writers*, suggested that this is an aspiration to which Irish authors are especially prone. *How It Is*, itself a text of barely 150 pages, has been followed only by very much shorter prose works: all of them are described by their author as fragmentary, as *Residua* or *Fizzles*. Among these shorter works, several seem to offer a prophetic vision of the end of a world that has not yet quite ended, or (to put it another way) the moments before entropy, or (to put it yet another way) time just before it stops.

I am deliberately mixing religious and scientific terms to convey the paradoxical style of these late works. Stretches of them are written without verbs and read like notes for a coldly precise scientific report, but suddenly we find a turn of phrase that reminds of the King James Bible, without being in any way a quotation. These phrases would not be out of place among the Minor Prophets or in the Book of Revelation. My favorite, both for its rhythm and for its ironic message of hope, comes from *Lessness*: "He will curse God as in the blessed days face to the open sky the passing deluge." Roll *that* on your tongue while you consider its implications: God and Man together again, believing in each other, blaming each other, afflicting each other. Not "happy days" exactly, but blessed days, and certainly happier than those after the recent greatly exaggerated death of God, when Man suddenly found it hard to believe in his own existence.

I have already mentioned the photograph of Beckett praying at his mother's knee. *How It Is* contains an extraordinary evocation of the moment captured in the photograph, as experienced by the child:

next another image . . . it's me all of me and my mother's face
I see it from below
we are on a veranda smothered in verbena the scented sun dapples
the red tiles . . .
the huge head hatted with birds and flowers is bowed down over
my curls the eyes burn with severe love I offer her mine pale
upcast to the sky whence cometh our help and which I know perhaps
even then with time shall pass away
in a word bolt upright on a cushion on my knees whelmed in a
nightshirt I pray according to her instructions that's not all
she closes her eyes and drones a snatch of the so-called Apostles'
Creed I steal a look at her lips
she stops her eyes burn down on me again I cast up mine in haste
and repeat awry

This passage reveals to us both the beginning of a religious education and its final result. Integrated with Beckett's own prose are familiar and less familiar passages from the King James Bible. The first, from Psalm 121, contains an odd mistake which Beckett also makes elsewhere: the first verse of the psalm says, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the *hills*, from whence cometh my help," but the next verse reads, "my help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth,"

so the child shows a firm grasp of essentials. The idea that the sky "with time shall pass away" seems to have two biblical sources: Saint Matthew (5:18), "till heaven and earth pass," and Revelation (10:5, 6), "and the angel . . . sware . . . that there should be time no longer. . . ."

The mention of "the so-called Apostles' Creed" is not intended as mockery: it's more like a piece of pedantry. Whatever tradition may say, scholars agree that this creed was composed long after the last apostle was dead. If there *is* any mockery in the passage, it comes from the child's being too young to understand the words and repeating them awry. But the quotation as a whole shows how thoroughly the mature Beckett, then nearly sixty, had assimilated the language of the King James version (though the word "whelmed" doesn't in fact occur in it), and also many of the religious ideas expressed therein. The mother's eyes burn with "severe love," a seemingly contradictory phrase until we remember that "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" (Hebrews 12:6), and "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" (Revelation 3:19). The lessons that Mary Roe Beckett gave Samuel, her younger son, may have been repeated awry to begin with, but eventually they were learned by heart.

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MERTON ON THE MOVE

JAMES T. BAKER

Following his footsteps to Thailand

I remember Thomas Merton as a man always on the move, always saying goodbye, always escaping. Strange to say this of one who lived twenty-seven years behind the same monastic enclosure wall—but true.

The first time he said goodbye and escaped my inquiring eye was late in 1962, a year of Catholic reform in Rome and a Catholic President in Washington, when I first visited Gethsemani Abbey with a group of young Southern Baptist seminarians. We were all a bit tense taking our first shaky steps toward ecumenicity, a bit unnerved by the stark simplicity and unbearable silence of the Trappists, a bit obvious in our skeptical comments on this odd way of life. We were totally unprepared for the casual, gregarious monk who came walking out in his off-white robe and oversized shoes, sat down in the middle of his blue-suited Protestant audience as though talking with separated brethren were old hat with him, and began talking with us as if Baptists were human beings—maybe even Christians.

We knew he was Someone Important and that we were extremely lucky to have him as our speaker, our professor had told us so, but none of us had ever read his many books, and we were amazed to find that a man who had spent twenty years in a monastery knew as much and more about the world out there where we lived than we did. He talked, he listened, he laughed and made us laugh. He was one of us. Yet he wasn't, not completely. Even amid the laughter and plain talk and give-and-take there was about him an elusive quality that separated him from us. He was there with us in the sunny November parlor, but he was someplace else too. When we were finished, the older (less worldly) monks took us out to see chapel, barn, and cemetery. Merton smiled, waved, and went off down a long dark hallway to his work. We couldn't go.

Five years later he came back down that hallway to greet me. This time I was alone. I had given up my blue ministerial suit for jeans and a sweatshirt. I had given up The Ministry for Academia. I was in the midst of writing a ridiculously long doctoral dissertation on the life and thought of Thomas Merton. My first letters had not reached him, but then a mutual friend had intervened, and from that point on he had faithfully and patiently answered all my correspondence. Now I was invited up for a long winter afternoon's talk.

This time he was more restrained, more dignified, somewhat less comfortable in his role as An Important Person About Whom One Writes A Doctoral Dissertation. He seemed to miss the noisy gaggle of Baptists. But he was still eloquent. We talked of how he had left "the world" only to discover at Gethsemani that he *was* the world, only to return after twenty years to play his part (literary, prophetic) in a social revolution and in opposition to a war that would destroy a civilization in order to save it. We talked frankly and openly. We were one—or so I thought until at the end I made a request.

He had recently moved out of the monastery proper to a hermitage in the hills. I asked if I might walk up with him and see it. A veil descended. Once again I strongly felt the separation. We were suddenly no longer two wise social commentators. I was a scholar, a Protestant, a married man, and I don't know what else. He was a monk. He was nice about it. He was sorry, but no I couldn't go. It was snowing as we came to the door. He pulled up his hood as he started across the meadow. He turned and waved and was gone.

The next September, in 1968, I returned once again. Merton had received a copy of my dissertation, read it, approved it with several reservations, and wanted us to get together to talk about it. In addition, something big was brewing for him, bigger than a new book or a papal commendation, something he wanted to share with me, a trip someplace.

He specifically asked me to bring my wife. He liked women. He relished their company. He talked more with her than with me. He posed for her to make sketches of him for a portrait. He joked about everything. From the picnic lunch he had told me to bring, he chose a hamburger sandwich and gave a strong "no thank you" to one with cheese. (He had made too many "cheeses for Jesus" to eat the stuff.) He good-naturedly passed up a chance for beer to drink Cokes with his Baptist guests. He told us of the trip. He was going to Asia. He would meet a lot of impressive people. He would study Buddhism. He might even get to live in an Indian monastery. It was all something of a secret still—to keep down the rumors he was leaving Geth-

JAMES T. BAKER *is professor of American religious history at Western Kentucky University and author of a book on Thomas Merton.*

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semani for good—but it was all set. It was a dream come true.

At last we cleaned up our picnic scraps and started to go. He led us through the bookstore, stopped and thumbed through a couple of his newer books, and signaled the brother at the cash register he was giving them to me. The brother smiled and shrugged. After all, they were Merton's books. They had earned Gethsemani a million dollars. Then across the store a young man and woman spotted him and began to whisper. They might have been New Yorkers or Kentuckians: styles in hair and clothing were already beginning to make such identification difficult. They came over and called him Father Merton. Again the veil. Again the separation. He was no longer the comrade, the jolly friend, now he was a priest—and worse, a famous priest. He gave them a blessing, seriously, quickly, turned and nodded to us, and disappeared through a side door.

This time he didn't return. On December 10, three months later, I woke to hear N.B.C. announce that he had been electrocuted in Bangkok, Thailand. This time the separation was complete. He had escaped us all. This time it was for good.

* * *

He was gone, but he wouldn't leave me alone. Translated logically: I couldn't leave him alone. I went to Gethsemani. I found a simple white cross on a gentle hill near the chapel. Merton wasn't there. I would go many times, but I would never find him.

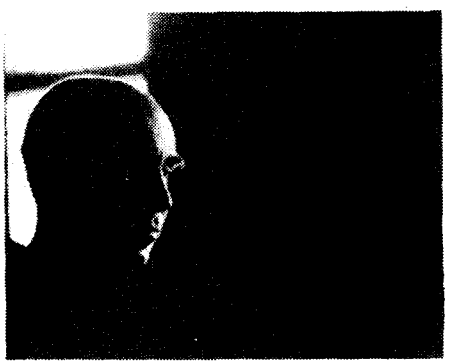
This was the beginning of a quest that went much deeper than my earlier intellectual quest. The year 1968, with all its carnage, led me into deep depression; and as the '70s dawned I found myself, along with many other people, looking for my roots.

I would go to Mississippi to search for another of my spiritual fathers, William Faulkner. I would find his grave too (more elaborate, more secular than Merton's, surrounded by Compsons and Snopeses, those fictional families he made into universal archetypes), but I would no more find Faulkner in Oxford than I would find Merton at Gethsemani.

Gethsemani and Oxford: odd places to produce a Merton and a Faulkner really. Both are small, both obscure, both somewhat proud of their varying degrees of illiteracy. They are in fact far less significant, less the microcosms of Reality than their creators made them. Merton's Gethsemani and Faulkner's Oxford (Jefferson) were for the most part only in their heads. The very oddity of the two places, their unconventionality, their inhospitality to things foreign and intellectual, their penchants for choking prophets, their earthiness, gave Merton and Faulkner great potential to exploit; but without their chroniclers they are sadly empty.

On my trips to Oxford I did see—because Faulkner saw and captured them in his stories—earth mothers like Lena Grove and Eula Varner Snopes, eternal black guardians of sense and sensibility like Dilsey and Luster, symbols of human freedom (tragic and comic) like Quentin and Quentin Compson. At Gethsemani, because Merton saw them and captured them in his poetry, I did see a partial vision of Reality behind the common changes of season in nature, the classic conflict between the inner tugs of rejection and acceptance of life created by monasticism's paradox, the very real Eternal Flame in the Catholic festival of lights. But I didn't find the Faulkner or the Merton I was looking for in either place.

I wrote a book about Merton, then a series of articles, then a play. Nothing helped. I neither found nor exorcised him. It all even turned a shade morbid. I left the Merton Library at Bellarmine College one



stormy day and was almost struck by lightning. I decided that if I kept looking I would be electrocuted too.

I was offered a job teaching in Korea. An Asian journey, like his. I accepted, knowing that I would go searching for Merton, convinced I would die. I had been in Seoul less than six months when I was invited to read a paper at a conference on American religion in Bangkok. This was it.

* * *

I flew south from Hong Kong on a warm autumn afternoon, nine years after Merton made the same trip. Now that the new Communist governments were installed, we had to make a wide sweep around the bulge of southeast Asia. As we once again headed north and east, up the Gulf of Siam, the sun dropped into a bank of western clouds, leaving behind it a bloody gash over Burma and India. To the right Vietnam and Cambodia lay in darkness.

Bangkok that night and in succeeding days gave no appearance of being the capital of a country threatened on every side by socialist neighbors. Thai civilization, royalist, Buddhist, delicately pastel, is a rich and tortured blend of old and new—with all the problems that attend transition, problems so near Merton's heart: how to become new without destroying the old: how to become modern without killing the beautiful. Buddhism,

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a strong dose of it, with roots clinging firmly to bedrock, gives a bustling, fume-choked metropolis crowded between old canals (now badly polluted) a disconcerting tranquillity. Monks in Thailand are honestly poor, truly respected, firmly established as representatives and symbols of honor and decency; but it is obvious that they will have to become more socially active if they are to help their country through the difficult days ahead. It was thus the perfect setting for a conference on the themes Merton could address, themes he did address before he died there.

Knowing better but still drawn to it, I began my search for Merton, this time for the place where he died. I wasn't sure what I wanted to find, but I had to go on looking. Working blindly, I was fortunate to stop first at the Church of the Holy Redeemer. A priest there had been called on December 10, 1968, to help whisk Merton's body out of Thailand before the Thai police could tie it up for weeks with red tape. The Case of the Monk's Body, it intrigued me. I could imagine Merton having a good laugh about it.

The priest, a friendly sort of man with the air of benign early decay so typical of Americans in the tropics, was happy to spend his morning telling me about the day Merton died: the mad race with the Thai Keystone Kops to an American army morgue: the hurried evaluation of Merton's possessions in which an illegible journal, later to be a famous book, was declared "no value": the joke he played on his friend the C.I.A. agent by telling him Merton had been assassinated. (The agent promised to check it out and was the next morning conveniently killed in an automobile accident.) He told me how to find what Merton in his journal called "the Red Cross place" at the southeast edge of Bangkok, the place he was to die, and wrote the address in the strange mirror-latin Thai script. I thanked him and left, not knowing whether I really wanted to go there, knowing I would.

* * *

I went out in a Japanese-made, open-air Thai taxi. The driver was glad to trade his Saturday of hustling for ten American dollars. We were over an hour picking our way through fifteen miles of traffic, as I fought not to take deep breaths of poison gas and road grime, before we came to open countryside, clean air and canals, and a taste of what Thailand used to be. We found the big Red Cross sign on the right.

The hospital, once a T.B. sanitarium, later a home for the aged, lay along the road leading down to the Gulf of Siam. A canal led through the fence and beside the hospital, then wound its way beside a large conference hall and several small dormitories in back. I had a hard time explaining to the nurse at reception what I wanted. "Do you remember a conference here nine years ago. . ?" Nothing. "Do you know the name Thomas Merton?" No. "A man died here—an electric fan." Bingo. Yes, him. The one westerners are always asking about.

(This is apparently a peculiarly western Christian thing, this looking for the places holy men were born and died. Buddhists may do it some, but they know better. Everyone lives and dies many times. Besides, a person can't be found in one place or be judged by what happens there.)

The nurse smiled indulgently at my barbarian infatuations and led me out of the hospital and along the canal toward the dormitories. We passed the large conference hall with screened windows where Merton concluded his last speech by saying, "I'll just disappear. . . ." We paused at a small building. This had been Merton's. He had wanted to be alone so he had taken the upstairs. Inside a cleaning lady remembered the afternoon someone burst in saying a man had died. They had brought him down these stairs. (I followed her up, thinking how hard it must have been to negotiate that turn.) He had of course been electrocuted. (Yes, I knew.) He had taken a bath here. (Yes. But it was simply a tub with a faucet, not a shower as reported, a more fitting ablution than a shower.) Then he had come into the bedroom through this door. (I see, but the floor is plain hardwood, not terrazzo as reported, not as dramatic or reasonable, his crucifix more like Christ's than those with precious stones show.) Before lying down he had reached to turn on this fan.

I stared at it. It was a tall blue upright with a blunt base and a round head. *The* fan! Oh no, the maid said, this wasn't *the* fan, not the one that killed him, but it was just like this one. Did I care to turn the switch here, as he had done, just to see how it felt? (Yes, of course. No, on second thought, no, I don't believe I will.) The reason it killed him, she explained, was that the wire must run under the door, like you see here, to plug in here in the next room. The opening and closing of the door frayed it and exposed the live wires.

She opened the door to show me. She stared. I stared. We looked at each other. The cord on this fan was frayed too. Hot wires lay poised to strike. It's just as well you didn't turn it on, isn't it? (Yes. Yes, indeed.) She jerked the plug, wrapped the tattered wire around the fan's sullen neck, and carried it away down the stairs. I watched from the window as she carried it, like some proverbial lost sheep, toward a distant repair shop.

I waited for my heart to slow. I looked around the bedroom, inspected the bath and hall, wandered back down the stairs and outside. I stood for a long time in the hot November sun. It would be snowing back in Kentucky now. Merton wasn't there. He wasn't here. He had escaped again—down some back bedroom drainpipe on Easter Sunday morning—like Faulkner's Quentin Compson the younger. So speculated a South-

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ern Baptist searching in vain for a Catholic saint in a Buddhist land.

* * *

Back in Korea a letter waited for me. One of my students, another of the growing cadre of Merton followers, had spent the summer in France and had gone down to Prades where Merton was born. No one there, not even the parish priest, knew precisely where the poet was born. Too much time had passed. Too many bohemian artists had had babies there.

Faulkner is not in Oxford. Merton is not in Prades, Gethsemani, or Bangkok. So, indeed, what difference does it make where a great man is born or lives or dies? Maybe the Buddhists do, as Merton suspected, know a thing or two.

WHAT IS BEGIN UP TO?

Just about three years ago I crossed the Litani River at least twice, but I can't remember a thing about it. I can remember the barbed wire and cyclone fencing along the Israeli-Lebanese border well enough, and the mine fields on the Lebanese side of the wire. My friend Tim Hobart and I stopped along the way and watched an Israeli patrol car follow the fence across the valley, kicking up dust. I remember that, and I remember the small Lebanese hill towns, where the Christian girls all seemed dressed for church in the middle of the week, wearing trim wool skirts, beige sweaters with bone buttons, stockings. I remember the cafe where we stopped for lunch, and the wheat fields, and the fly-buzzing peace of the afternoon, but I don't remember anything about the Litani River.

Which is odd, considering the importance of rivers in that parched countryside. I remember the Jordan well enough. It struck me, when we crossed the old Allenby Bridge, as not much more than a stream, a pretty poor excuse for a river. But of course the people on both banks have been plundering it for water to irrigate crops, and even a stream, in the desert, makes an impression. Whenever I cross Broad Brook, a stream in central Vermont which is just as wide, if not quite so deep as the Jordan, I think of all the lyric poetry it would have inspired over the last five thousand years, if only it had run through Palestine. So far as I know, Broad Brook in its current location has never inspired so much as a couplet. Which is okay with me.

Life's nicer near a prosy brook in cool retreat,
Than next a poet's river churned by warriors' feet.

I suppose the Litani River was a disappointing trickle like the Jordan, but I can't remember. The only image the name brings back is that of a Palestinian intellectual, sometime political activist, and lecturer at the American University in Beirut named Sadik Al Azam, a tall, handsome fellow with a bad back. He apologized and then lay on pillows on the floor while he talked. One of the things he talked about was the Litani River, saying, as if the fact must be elementary to any disinterested observer: "The Israelis have got their eye on the Litani. They want it, and one of these days they're going to find an excuse to come and get it."

Before you read any further, ask yourself: Is *that* what's going on? Is Begin making a grab for the Litani River?

It's a sure sign things have gone seriously wrong when the news stories don't make sense. The stories out of the Middle East haven't made sense since Christmas. They stopped making sense when Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat began to quarrel about Israeli settlements in the Sinai, an issue which spontaneously generated from the noosphere. These settlements were never a problem before. Israel needs peace, not settlements. The argument over the Sinai settlements is utterly baffling. What in heaven's name can Begin be thinking of?

The same goes for the Israeli-Egyptian impasse over the West Bank. Israel has important security interests in the West Bank—interests both greater in importance and harder to defend than is generally recognized—but the idea that the West Bank belongs to Israel is preposterous. Why is Begin suddenly saying—the first Israeli premier to so much as suggest such a thing—that UN Resolution 242 doesn't apply to the West Bank or the Gaza strip? Of course it applies. What can Begin be up to?

Ever since Sadat's trip to Jerusalem, Begin has been behaving in a bewildering manner, responding to Sadat's generous gesture with provocative pettifoggery, not only rejecting all talk of independence for "Judea and Samaria"—the ancient Jewish names for the West Bank—but actually trying to establish more settlements. For years the Israelis claimed the Arabs were not interested in a "real peace." But as soon as a leader comes along who shows every sign of being ready to make a real peace (at great personal risk, it might be added, a fact suggesting the train may not linger long at the station), Begin calls him intransigent, ridicules his terms, condescends to his emissary, and in general behaves as if peace were the very last thing on Israel's mind. None of this makes sense. Clearly things are going seriously wrong.

But worse is to come. On Saturday, March 11, eleven terrorists from Al Fatah—largest of the guerrilla groups in the Palestine Liberation Organization—landed in Israel and over the next few hours murdered 34 civi-

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lians. These PLO raids have a genuinely sickening quality, not only because the victims are almost always weaponless civilians, but because the PLO has been so degraded as to look on the murder of children as an act of heroism. Only a people completely stripped of dignity and self-respect could take pride in such sneaking cruelty.

But then Begin vows that Israel "will cut off the evil arm" and two days later makes his threat good with a full-scale invasion of Lebanon which does not end until Israel has occupied some 450 square miles of Lebanese territory. In the process, Israel kills some 700 Palestinians and Lebanese. Who are the victims? For the most part, civilians, a fact which must be induced from the nature of the targets (villages and refugee camps) because the press cannot seem to focus on their names, occupations, legal status, cause of injury, and so on. We heard a good deal about Gail Rubin, the American photographer murdered by the Palestinians after they had asked her for directions. But reporters have trouble identifying the victims of Israeli bombers and artillery, with the result that a woman's claim that her husband, sister and three children were all killed in an air raid comes out sounding vaguely fraudulent.

Well it's not so. These are real civilians, and they have been genuinely killed, and their deaths have no more reason than Gail Rubin's. The degradation of the Palestinians has proved contagious; the Israelis are guilty of choosing known civilian targets. If Israel's victims are not *quite* so cold-bloodedly dispatched as Gail Rubin on the beach north of Tel Aviv, the process is pretty callous all the same. These people have no defense against Israeli fighter-bombers; it's like shooting ducks on a pond, and 700 ducks is a lot of ducks in retaliation for 34 ducks. So many they can't even get the number right. Do you really think the dead were exactly 700 in number? No; that is only the rough figure. No one seems to have taken the trouble to establish the *exact* figure.

None of this makes sense. The Israeli-Lebanese border was all but impenetrable, raids were few, what did Israel gain by pushing the border north to the Litani River? Does Begin fail to see the risk he runs when he bombs Arab civilians with American planes? Does he think the rest of the world will never learn basic arithmetic, but will go on indulgently figuring that 700 equals 34? So far Anthony Lewis of the *New York Times*, notably in a column on March 20, has been all but alone in pointing out the arithmetic of atrocity, but how long can this last? The scale of Israeli retaliation doesn't make sense. The timid American reaction—it's hard to say whether Washington or the press waffled more—doesn't make sense. With Sadat's visit peace never looked closer; now it has rarely looked further away, and none of it makes any sense at all.

Or so it might seem at first glance.

But something is going on here, and our confusion does not reflect the facts so much as it does our failure to grasp their meaning. The heart of the problem is the passion which runs so high where Arabs and Israelis are concerned. Americans in particular shrink from the awful consequences of a shift in sympathy, with the result that most commentary on the prospects for peace in the Middle East seems to be written in either of two moods: lawyerly devotion to the client's case on the part of those who hope Israel is in the right, but are for Israel right or wrong; and a kind of sentimental befuddlement on the part of those who are neutral in theory, but are afraid someone is going to ask why the United States should back Israeli claims to Arab territory to the tune of better than $1 billion a year.

The American role in this struggle is anomalous. Carter has been much criticized for slipping towards partisanship, rather than an honest broker whose only desire is to get the two sides together, but there is something a bit surreal in the notion that the principal, indeed the only supporter of one side in a dispute can be a genuine mediator. If Israeli claims are indeed unfair, then our support of those claims must partake of the injustice. So far, only the Arabs have been pointing this out. With little effect, because so far American Jews and the American public have been pretty much in agreement where Israel is concerned. One does not like to contemplate the result if the two should ever slip out of phase. Am I alone in conceiving the ultimate outcome as a new *aliyah*? I doubt it. This is clearly a very serious matter.

But that is all the more reason to attempt to understand what is going on. Governments do not often act in haste or unconsidered passion, but peoples do, and the best way to avoid the sort of misunderstanding which might rend the American public and simultaneously encourage a new war is to focus on what is at stake in the momentarily stalled negotiations. This is

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not something solely in the province of the press, but the press has done such a bad job of it so far that the whole debate is veering about like a rudderless ship in a rising sea.

It strikes me that the first point to understand is the fact that the negotiations are only stalled, not halted, and that their seeming disarray is a sign of their seriousness. Peace for Israel would be as fundamental as a constitution, and just as Israel has found it easier to live without a written constitution, thus avoiding such questions as the role of religion in the state, she has found it easier to live with cease-fires, than a negotiated peace. Peace, in short, is not to be lightly entered into.

The second thing to understand is that the terms of the peace matter a great deal to the Israelis and the Palestinians, but not much to the Egyptians, Jordanians, and Syrians. By this I mean that the terms might threaten the governments of those countries, but not their national existence. If Sadat were to be blamed for a "bad deal" he might lose his job, but Egypt's independence as a nation would hardly be threatened. That is not the case with either the Israelis, whose state has won only partial acceptance, and might lose what it has; or the Palestinians, who have no state at all, but want one. With these two points in mind, it strikes me that Israeli policy—to call it Begin's is to ignore the similarity of his predecessors' stand—may be explained by any or all of three goals:

First: a big Israel. That is a term Israelis themselves use to describe an Israel which includes the West Bank. A glance at the map reveals its logic. A lot of Israelis are willing to let the West Bank go, but a lot are not. The West Bank was at the heart of the ancient kingdom of Solomon, and a peace which surrendered it would mean giving it up pretty much forever. In addition to sentiment are practical considerations of security (I wrote about this at length in "The Road to Tel Aviv," *Commonweal*, April 29, 1977) and while it is at least theoretically possibly to establish a West Bank state which would not threaten Israeli security, it would be far from easy to do in fact. The American government probably understands this, but its people do not.

Second: an end to the Palestinians as an independent people. They are pretty tightly squeezed already, not much better off than a stateless minority like the Kurds. Everybody knows that the Palestinians are hostile to Israel; it is not so well known that they are *very* hostile. They think they have a right to live freely in Israel, just as Russian and South African Jews do under the law of return. An independent Palestinian state would give them a standing in international law they do not currently enjoy, and they could be expected to keep the pot boiling forever. Israel might return the West Bank to Jordan, with suitable guarantees; they certainly do not want to give it to the Palestinians.

Third: an Israeli Jerusalem. It is an interesting fact that we have not heard much about Jerusalem in the last few months, despite the fact it is potentially the hardest nut of all. It strikes me as at least possible that all the seeming confusion is really only maneuvering around this last central issue. If the Arabs really want Jerusalem back—I mean, *really* want it back—then a peace agreement is out of the question, because Israel won't surrender it. If Israel knows that a peace agreement would founder on this issue alone, it would make sense for her to be intransigent on all the others, since nothing would isolate Israel more than to be blamed for holding out for a city whose sovereignty means so little to the world at large, and so much to her.

From the confusion then, two things emerge: what Israel wants are Jerusalem and security; and these things take time. It required 30 years and four wars to begin direct talks with the Arabs; very likely it will take another 30 to work out the details, if we're lucky.

THOMAS POWERS

SOB SISTERS

THE SCREEN

An Unmarried Woman, *Coming Home*, *Pretty Baby*, *The Goodbye Girl* and *House Calls* all have something in common. They all exploit women. Four of these five movies are about a woman who finds herself on her own with a child to support, and in all four she solves the problem the only way that a woman, by implication, can—by getting a man to pick up the bills. Actually, in *Goodbye Girl* and *House Calls* this is something that happens to the heroines (Marsha Mason and Glenda Jackson), not something they do. They are themselves only charmingly ineffectual. The only woman showing any initiative in any of these films is Susan Sarandon in *Pretty Baby*, who at least acquires her husband on purpose. In *An Unmarried Woman* Jill Clayburgh solves the same problem differently, by doing what Jane Fonda, who has other problems, does in *Coming Home*: she lets her husband continue to support her while she plays around with another man. (That is what Clayburgh's husband deserves, since he walked out on her first. But does it show that she has great strength of character because she can be humiliated by him without letting it change her life style?)

The truth is that all these films deal with sexual politics by pretending it isn't a form of real politics—the kind which deals with economic relations, or the distribution of power—at all. The only real politics that gets into any of them is the Vietnam war, which serves

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as background for *Coming Home*. Jane Fonda's husband, Bruce Dern, is a gung-ho Marine captain who goes to Vietnam, and while he's gone she has an affair with a paraplegic Viet vet, Jon Voight, who becomes an anti-war demonstrator. Jane Fonda was one of the prime movers behind getting this film made, presumably because she found attractive the role of a woman caught up in serious political issues. The film itself doesn't live up to such expectations, however. Instead of creating a heroine who is politically serious, it turns its political issues into soap opera. The clash between militarism and radical dissent is reduced to the eternal triangle, a drama which has psychological implications at the cost of ideological ones. Moreover, the woman remains a mere prize of battle here. When Dern and Voight come face to face at last, Fonda simply stands on the sidelines fretting. She is not herself a political force. She is only there to be fought over.

The night of the Academy Awards we also got on television the spectacle of Jane Fonda in an interview congratulating herself because, "Nixon is gone, but I'm still here." She took this as a sign of political progress in America. But in the very act of beaming so, she gave us reason to doubt her credibility on this issue. Since the first duty of a radical is self-criticism, as every revolutionist from Marx to Mao agrees, bragging about your political consciousness betrays your lack of it. Instead of practicing self-criticism, Fonda was indulging in its opposite—displaying an unseemly egomania, which is only the first duty of a movie star. She probably even thinks that, besides ousting Nixon, she is the reason *Coming Home* has at last been produced. It doesn't occur to her that this film finally got done only because heads far cooler than hers realized there was now money to be made on a tear-jerker about the Viet vets. What political "commitment" does it take to make this film now, when Vietnam has already inflicted all the paraplegia it is ever going to inflict? The only time for this crying was when the war was still going on. The rest is a lot of crocodile tears.

Like its Vietnam policy, *Coming Home*'s sexual politics are also contained, presumably, in the drama of two men squaring off to do combat over a woman. This primitivism is a nice touch, and entirely typical of the mentality found in all these films. When two men fight over Jill Clayburgh in *An Unmarried Woman*, for instance, she finally realizes she's in love with one of them. At least, I assume that's the import of the scene, since she's been resisting him until then but immediately goes home to sleep with him when he punches out this other man for her. It's hard to get so clear a reading on the women in these films at other times, though. Like the values reflected in their love of brutality, their ways of expressing emotion tend to remain rather—shall we say—traditional. Jane Fonda changes her hair style to let us know which way the wind is blowing in her love life. Marsha Mason in *Goodbye Girl* redecorates her apartment. Jill Clayburgh thinks long and deeply about whether she should move to a new apartment, something with working fireplaces in Soho instead of the glass penthouse on the east side she now lives in. A real dilemma.

The unmarried woman seems at times a rather existential type. Her one strong emotion is nausea. When her husband tells her he's leaving, she spits up in the street. The rest of the time, though, she's too comfortable for *angst*. That's the problem of all the women in these films, even Brooke Shields, who plays a twelve-year-old forced into prostitution in *Pretty Baby*. Judging by *Pretty Baby*, in fact, we would have to conclude that the more hardbitten the reality is in a film about women, the more romanticized the film will be. This one attempts to replace the old myth that all whores are miserable and self-despising with a new myth that they live indolent, carefree, enjoyable lives. They're happy hookers all. Since the two myths are equally dehumanizing, it's hard to say which is the more pernicious. *Pretty Baby* is a little like some twenties or thirties movie melodrama run through the projector backwards. From being a fallen woman (albeit a prepubescent one), Brooke progresses to the sort of marriage that usually goeth before a fall, and from that to being taken in hand by her mother so she can have a childhood and a proper upbringing. The moral is that we should not consider rape, abandonment and brutalization to be impediments to a happy childhood. *Nothing* phases this kid. Her problem is not that life offers her a hard choice, or no choices, but only that it doesn't offer her enough choices to keep her amused. She's not so much a person as an atmosphere that has to be maintained.

As I said before, all the women in these films somehow fall short of existential suffering. What they experience instead is a kind of listlessness. The men have their lapses, to be sure. Richard Dreyfuss announces in *Goodbye Girl* that he eats only health food and is "very careful" what he puts in his body; then he whips up a spaghetti dinner for Marsha Mason, complete with cheap chianti. Keith Carradine, a peripatetic photographer of prostitutes in *Pretty Baby*, first announces that he cares only for his work, not people; then he promptly falls in love with pretty baby and marries her. But the heroines in these films are even worse off. They have nothing to lapse from. Their lives are aimless and meandering to begin with. This is why Mason tinkers with her apartment and Fonda with her hair. They have nothing else to do with themselves, no larger perception of life. It is also why Jill Clayburgh, the most vacuous comedienne to come along in years, is perfectly cast as the unmarried woman, who is the archetypal character that all these films are about.

COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR.

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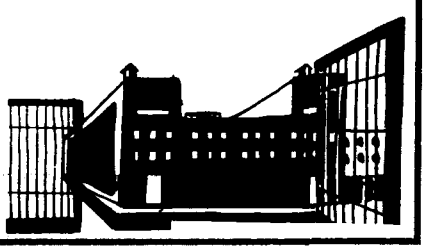
LITERATURE BEHIND BARS

SAUL MALOFF



MERLE Haggard (I have it on the authority of H. Bruce Franklin in *The Victim as Criminal and Artist: Literature from the American Prison, Oxford*, $13.95, 337 pp.) "is of course the most popular country and western singer and songwriter in America." It is no accident, as we determinists like to say, that Haggard "chose to open his famous concert in Muskogee, Oklahoma" with his celebrated ballad "Mama Tried," as it has to do with his criminal and prison experience and his life, as man and artist, we are told, turns on that. As the concert is famous and the ballad "crucial" (all of Franklin's examples are crucial), you are *of course* familiar with it, indeed are probably singing it softly to yourself (and loved ones within earshot) at this very moment; but in the unlikely event that it somehow slipped your mind, let me remind you of it: "I turned twenty-one in prison,/ Doing life without parole./ No one could steer me right/ But Mama tried, Mama tried,/ Mama tried to raise me better,/ But her pleading I denied./ That leaves only me to blame,/ 'Cause Mama tried."

Haggard is also of course the creator of "The Fighting Side of Me," his "most nationalistic song": "When you're running down my country, hoss,/ You're walking on the fighting side of me." But contrary to the "usual liberal caricature of Haggard as a raving reactionary" Franklin assures us that despite certain regrettable ideological lapses "his art is basically a people's art," which is an excellent and virtuous thing for art to be; and, therefore, for conclusive ratification of "Mama Tried" we are invited to listen to the "recorded tumultuous ovation of the people in Muskogee," who accorded the "biggest cheers" to the pivotal line, "Doing life without parole"—as who, sitting there on that electric night, would not clap his hands raw in tribute to that dark vision of eternity captured in a grain of sand? Recently, the producer of Easter pageantry at the Radio City Music Hall, lamenting the prospective demise of that palace of culture, called it the "greatest theater in the history of the world," adducing as conclusive evidence the awesome fact that some quarter of a billion people had passed through its portals in the thirty-eight years of its existence, a claim his counterpart in Athens or the Globe Theatre could certainly never have made. By cash-register aesthetics, kitsch is elevated to art by the decibel level of cheering multitudes.

But great though Haggard may be, and surely is, Franklin finds him wanting in one crucial respect: "his consciousness was never touched by the Afro-American movement" and so he fails by that touchstone to meet the most exacting radical-ideological standards by which the highest art is to be judged. Someone named Ross Laursen, for eight years Chairman of the Folsom Creative Writers' Workshop, and lucky enough to have a Comanche mother, "sees America in a different light," by grace of the special insight conferred by inheritance, as manifested by his short poem "Fourteen Year Old Boys Make the Easiest Targets," cited here in its entirety: 'I eat Watergate/ with my breakfast/ each morning/ and wonder/ how many/ will die/ that day/ in America/ by a warning shot/ in the back."

Sometimes, it is possible to attain to the heights though one is by some oversight bereft of the redeeming blood, as for example in the case of John Sinclair, identified only as "a leading white revolutionary." In saying "only," I give the game away, and identify myself with the class enemy and its decadent university-based canons of criticism, and as a racist to boot, as Franklin and other literary geneticists will surely note; for if a writer cannot, try as he may, be a Black revolutionary, he can still console himself by being a white revolutionary, not just an ordinary one but, as we used to say on the true, four-square Old Left, a "leading" one. If you are so benighted as not to know who John Sinclair is, so hopelessly out of touch with what really matters in our literary culture, there's no point in your asking and none in my telling; and since being a "revolutionary" in America, Black or white, Chicano or Native American, Jew or Gentile, female or male, is a state of mind and figure of speech once in vogue in some of our better universities and salons it matters not at all that there doesn't happen to be a revolution going at the moment or any in sight when last I looked (I very much regret to say, as we can certainly use a few just now).

Prison, by this light, is not so much a metaphor for a microcosm of America, as it is, after the horror has been acknowledged and discounted, a peculiarly exalted place, or, again, state of mind, or compression chamber of historical consciousness, for there a man—his life now directly objectified and the gauzy illusion as well as the fact of freedom fallen away—is far more likely to see the truth of his condition as victim of the social order: now he *knows* America is the prison, and he is, whatever the crime of record, a "political prisoner," whereas those on the outside don't . . . yet.

No doubt this view contains some measure of truth, as any categorical edict, if it casts its net wide enough, is likely to catch some part of some

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truth, including some great truth; but in Franklin's hands, by means of demogogic overstatement and exclusion of conflicting and modulating truths, it is transformed into an essentially paranoid view of the real world in that it projects a local, even a personal, predicament onto the world-at-large. (In such a world as this, Freud said, not altogether whimsically by any means, who can say the paranoic is wholly wrong?) And if reality is reduced to caricature by the turbulences of ideology, how can literature escape the whirlwind, the more so as the writings of "common criminals" are Franklin's subject, and his burden is to demonstrate the truth we have all been blind to (blinded as we are by our own class interests, racism, ideological enslavement to an antagonist world-view); not only that these writings should command our attention, admiration, respect; but that alongside them, what passes for literature in the universities shrinks into triviality.

Banners streaming, Franklin rises to the task, brandishing fistsful of verses, novels, memoirs. Malcolm Braly, of all people, largely because he remained impervious to the Afro-American revolutionary movement, never quite became the transcendent artist he might otherwise have been; nevertheless his *Felony Tank* is strangely touted as "clearly a more universal book; arguably a truer book, and I believe a better one" than *Catcher in the Rye*, just as Braly's *It's Cold Out There* reminds Franklin of nothing so much as Nathanael West "at his best." *Look for Me in the Whirlwind*: *The Collective Autobiography of the New York 21* is advanced as "one of the greatest achievements of the autobiographical mode," anywhere, at any time, a "living epic . . . giving an overwhelming sense of the truthfulness, heroism, and inevitability of their collective commitment to the liberation of their people." Its alleged greatness rests equally in its status as the epic of a revolutionary national liberation movement and its *collective* nature as a "people's art."

And here the underlying aesthetic premises of Franklin's polemic, portentously promised us from the beginning and sounded throughout like a muffled drum-roll, become explicit; here, where "we encounter head-on the conflict between the aesthetic dominant in the prison and the aesthetic dominant in the universities, which can see little value in such a book." *Look for Me in the Whirlwind* does not, Franklin says scornfully, "ask us to admire the creative genius of each individual artist, but to see each artist as merely representative of a collectivity." Franklin, who plays fast and loose at all times with the word "artist" as he does with the verdict "great," now summons his most scathing contempt from his very considerable arsenal for the opposing aesthetic, employing to that end the buzz-words of the now-extinct, "for the unique and original, for ambiguity and countless types of ambiguity, for architectonic structure or the self-conscious solipsism of a Nabokov or a Borges," those strutting peacocks and gaudy exemplars of bourgeois art and its apotheosis of the solitary, estranged, self-glorifying artist. No: "We are to look," we are instructed, "for what is common, clear, purposeful, useful. We are not supposed to sit around admiring the authors, but to get up and put their message into action"—in short, the latest version of the doctrine of art as a "weapon in the class struggle."

In this dark, bloody, world-encompassing fantasy where phantom cadres of the Black "nation," now disbanded and gone on to better things since Franklin last summoned them to armed struggle in a revolutionary movement that the Black masses rejected by indifference or hostility in favor of reformist politics, judicial redress and the pressures of mass organizations—in Franklin's dream of omnipotence, where the barricades are strewn with great works of art if we would but look, the crowning achievement is awarded with full fanfare not of course to any triumph of the individual imagination, "not to any single work," but to the "most collective autobiography of the American prison," which is "the body of poetry by Black prisoners," a rather open-ended body of work which, presumably, will not be consummated until the last prisoner has written the last poem on the last day before the last prison is at long last demolished (may God hasten the day).

Of the slim anthology provided us I choose my examples, space being what it is, by their length, but not unfairly. Here is T.J. Reddy: "The drum is the heartbeat/ Of mother Africa/ As she shapes life and/ Gives birth/ To the world . . . The drums sounded the warning/ Oppressors are coming/ Oppressors are coming/ And when slavers discovered/ How much we communicated/ With music they could not understand/ They took up our drums/ But not our rhythm." And James Lang: "Holds of/ Frigates/ Plying the North Atlantic,/ Engaged in the/ Black Gold trade that/ Was the cornerstone of/ Mercantilism, Capitalism/Americanism." And Insan (Robert S. Preston); in a memorial to the murdered Malcolm X: ". . . got me to thinking that/ if he wasn't the supreme being himself,/ AllIahGodMunguJehovahRama/ (after someone pulled my coat &/ told me that he was a man the same/ as me. it messed me around but i/ got it together)./ & what he was i am/ capable of being plus some." And Reddy again, in "one of his finest poems": "Going around in circles and getting/ Nowhere at different places/ All the time/ I ended up in a Black slum . . . Run fool run/ Run fool run/ Run fast as you can for help to that place/ Written across the front of that sweatsuit/ You are wearing." And, and, and . . .

But I won't go on; this is dirty work I'm doing, you've had enough of it, and I'm drowning in it. The Black convicts deserve better of me and of Franklin; I respect (and often

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SAUL MALOFF, *a novelist and critic whose most recent book was* Heartland, *is now working on a political memoir of the Fifties, the darkest side.*

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associate myself with) the emotions distantly underlying the verses. They are not, however, poets, and all of Franklin's pettifoggery and fustian will not make them that; and bacause they are not poets the emotions themselves are not well served and remain at a great distance, opaque and barely audible, outside the poem, and beyond its reach, there for the sympathetic reader only by an act of goodwill. There is, sad to say, no such thing as a "poetic" emotion which is not possessed by and fully rendered in the poem itself—that is a principle of criticism New and old and future, if it is to be worth the name, which is to say if it is to take poetry (and any other art) seriously. We can never promote good art by hailing bad art as models; bad art is not improved in the smallest degree by "good" messages; to say otherwise is art-hating.

How can Franklin, the plain and overwhelming evidence staring him in the face, suppose otherwise? Perhaps he is tone-deaf and word-blind—that's one possibility; he'd not be the only professor of literature so afflicted. Or so driven by ideology that the predetermined thesis is all and the truth nothing—a familiar if lamentable condition. If, perversely, he knows better, then surely such fulsome praise is nothing but craven flattery and favor-currying . . and thus a special and by no means unfamiliar form of condescension (generally reserved for children and our other lessers), the other face of which is the contempt he parades for the likes of Nabokov and Borges (to say nothing of Hawthorne, who is not to be forgiven for apologizing for slavery) and for the university (naturally Franklin is an academic, and like so many of his brethren given to this unpleasant little exercise in self-promotion).

This sort of criticism, where language is a debased currency and words are dislodged from consensual meaning and can be deployed to serve any tendentious purpose, goes in some quarters by the name "radical," though in fact it is pseudo-radical, bogus-revolutionary, latter-day Sixties histrionics in its wider, more willful, narcissistic, icon-smashing manifestations. Worse, it passes unchallenged as "Marxist," or even more loosely by that mischievous blanket-term "neo-Marxist," and it is precisely the sort of sacking of a great intellectual tradition that led Marx—the Marx who committed to memory whole scenes of his revered Greek tragedians and thought Balzac managed somehow to compose pretty fair novels despite his ideological limitations—to say in another connection: "I am not a Marxist." It is closer in spirit to the "aesthetics" of Lenin at his most philistine, to Zhdanov's (Stalin's alter ego in the field) at all times, and to the dreariest pronouncements and ukases in Mao's Yunan "talks" on art and literature, with their devastating consequences for cultural life in post-revolutionary China. Once, right here at home, we were called upon to regard Howard Fast as a great writer—remember? For this kind of criticism the true Marxist humanists might just as well never have lived and written (and not seldom died after long silence).

For Franklin to arrive on the scene at this late date (getting on for something like a century after the fact in its *modern* form) all breathless with wonder and excitement of original discovery, of a new "poetics" no less, is low comedy and sheer grandiose insolence. For him to proclaim to the nations this "aesthetic" by diktat, all the while vilifying as racist and reactionary those of us who would on the whole rather not, reveals a driven, self-righteous ideological passion in its most rampant form. And like those who are condemned to repeat them in every generation, he reveals the most invincible ignorance of the applicable lessons of cultural history.

How is it that those who elect themselves to speak in the name of the People always contrive to seat them below the salt and allot them the meagerest portions?

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THE HEART OF THE FACTOR

GERARD REEDY

The Human Factor
GRAHAM GREENE
Simon and Schuster, $9.95 [347 pp]

"Aren't you ever sad," Sarah Castle asks her husband, the principal character of *The Human Factor*, "that we haven't made a child?" Sarah is Maurice Castle's second wife, a black woman who has had a child by a previous lover. Although Castle loves Sarah deeply, he replies that her son, Sam, is enough for him. "I don't want to go on and on forever. I want the buck to stop here," he answers. Why prolong one's own genes into the misery of another generation?

Heroes in Graham Greene novels routinely talk this way. Surely, as here, the author arranges things so that they have enough to be depressed about. Sixty-two, slightly alcoholic, bored with the reports that pass across his desk at MI6, always afraid that his role as a double agent will be discovered, Castle commutes from London to the suburbs with his love for Sarah and Sam providing the only meaning in his life and also its only vulnerability. Unfortunately for the novel and the understanding of the above passage, Castle is also sterile and has known it for some years.

With such knowledge, why does Castle speak thus to his wife? Why does he make a groundless philosophical point instead of stating the obvious physiological fact? Only because his creator cannot resist the occasion for telling us all how miserable we all are, or should be. Greene's self-indulgence in this matter is so strong that he displays it even here, in the midst of this very fine new novel, at the risk of destroying its artistic integrity.

When the author refrains from editorializing, his Maurice Castle has, in fact, much to be happy about. Castle is happily married to the woman he loves; she loves him in return. This situation alone places Castle in far more felicitous circumstances than the Pinkies, Scobies, and Querries of past Greene novels were permitted to experience. When Castle finally tells his wife that he is a double agent, she says: "We have our own country. You and I and Sam. You've never betrayed that country, Maurice." However

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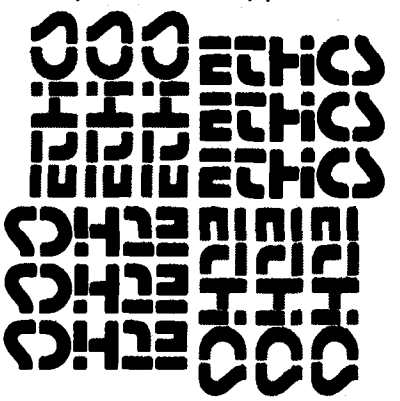

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Greene finally disrupts the romantic country of his own creation, its lovely geography considerably mellows the novel.

Imagery of disconnected telephone lines and solitary eavesdropping figures prominently here. At the end of the novel, exiled in Moscow, Castle manages to place a telephone call to his wife, still in Sussex and with no chance of immediately rejoining him. Success at getting the call through signifies a kind of triumph, however short-lived, over both Russian technology and English surveillance. Sarah and Maurice speak tenderly to one another. She tells him to "go on hoping," then realizes "that the line to Moscow was dead." These final words in the novel, again showing how Greene tampers with the human communications he himself engineers, do not outweigh, for me, the triumph of that communication. *The Human Factor* exhibits such a curious bifurcation of imaginative energy: of building up human happiness only to destroy it.

"Must reading for anyone interested in American Catholic social thought and action."

Charles E. Curran

LOVE AND THE URBAN GHETTO

by Paul Hanly Furfey

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Imagery of boxes also occurs again and again: the "watertight boxes" of the divisions of MI6, telephone booths, confessionals, the metaphorical boxes of human isolation, especially in the lesser characters of the novel. One can stay in these boxes, like the men who run MI6, or one can emerge from them in acts of pity and love. As in other Greene novels, emergence both ennobles and destroys, for it makes one vulnerable as it makes one human. In *The Human Factor*, Greene complicates this movement by letting Castle say that he acts not out of pity, but "to right the balance." His work for the Soviet begins in gratitude: seven years before the main action, an English Communist agent has smuggled Sarah out of South Africa. In his spying, Castle tries to repay what he owes—not to a system, but to people in a system who have broken out of it to be human and kind.

Greene's relation to socialism is interesting. We do not experience here the strident anti-capitalism of an earlier work like *This Gun for Hire.* Still, in *The Human Factor*, the good guys must scrape for a living, have to think twice about taking a taxi or dining out, and have sausage roll and a pint of Watney's for lunch. The bad guys eat at their clubs, discuss trout-fishing over the fish course, collect abstract art, and even promote, at one point, the value of carrying a gold toothpick from Cartier. Pennypinching herein accompanies personal integrity; wealth implies the absence of humanity. Although the penultimate episodes satirize the lack of creature-comforts in socialist Moscow, Greene integrates an anti-privilege bias into much of the novel.

It has already been pointed out, elsewhere and prominently, that John LeCarré does this sort of spy novel better. I think not. It is true that Castle learns at the end that the referral of information to his "control" has not been for the purpose he intended. The information in itself has not been valuable; when Castle discovers "Uncle Remus," an American-English-South African secret agreement, Moscow calls him in, knowing he cannot handle it. Yet Castle does not feel betrayed when he learns the truth. In LeCarré do not such reversals stand mainly as symbols of a corrupting system? In Greene the irony of the reversal points to unironic truth: however society, political or otherwise, qualifies or frustrates noble gestures, with whatever partial knowledge they have been made, their nobility yet remains. In the scale of values this novel sets up, Castle remains right in doing what he has done. Even though life defeats Castle, he could not have lived it honestly in any other way—an uncomfortable Greenean paradox that at best may be called tragic, at worst misanthropic.

The "human factor" of the title principally signifies Castle's family life: it motivates his treason and makes his exile hard. Another character, Colonel Daintry, head of security at MI6, is also allowed to experience a similar humanization; others, like the cool and evil Doctor Percival, who, Daintry knows, "was never lonely," lack pity and love. The "heart of the matter," the "end of the affair," a "burnt-out case": Greene likes to entitle complex imaginative constructs with clichés. He likes to make freshly human what we have long since used without thinking very much about.

Other thriller writers like LeCarré and especially Geoffrey Household have long since run on this turf: using plots of international intrigue as metaphors for human growth and betrayal. Comparing Greene with them, we must make a simple value judgment. In *The Human Factor*, and elsewhere, the vehicle exists for the tenor, the complication for the human revelation, and not the reverse. If the relationship between Greene's incarnational love for his characters and predetermined vengeance upon them is indigestible here, he has still taken a very large bite out of the human condition. His fault is trying to tell too much truth, not too little. It is a very bold thing to entitle one's set of narrative metaphors "the human factor." Greene so very nearly gets away with it.

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Turning East: The Promise and Peril of the New Orientalism

HARVEY COX

Simon and Schuster, $8.95 [192 pp]

MICHAEL TRUE

Turning East is a deceptively simple record of a Protestant minister's attempt to understand the turn toward neo-Oriental religions by a significant number of young American adults and the rejection of "liberal" Christianity and Judaism that the movement implies. It is a book about "a journey which began as a tour and turned into a pilgrimage," written with great skill and intelligence, filled with insights into the current state of the nation and informed by a wide range of precise knowledge of psychology, literature, and politics, as well as theology.

The idea for the book, Cox tells us in the opening paragraph, "began the day Harry, Denise and Michael knocked on my front door. It was a quiet Sunday afternoon, and when I opened the door, two young men and a young woman asked if they could come in and talk to me about Krishna. Both the men shaved their heads, except for a small ponytail at the back. They wore bright saffron robes, simple bead necklaces and sandals. . . . Only later on did I learn that their names were Harry, Denise and Michael [the first from a Protestant, the second from a Jewish, and the third from an Irish Catholic background]. They introduced themselves as Bhargava dasa, Krishna Kumari, and Caityaguru dasa. They were all members of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, better known as the Hare Krishna movement, and I asked them to come in."

This casual meeting led, with the help of Cox's students at Harvard Divinity School, to a serious investigation and, ultimately, to the author's fascination for and appreciation of what many Americans have found in neo-Oriental (with an emphasis upon neo-) religions and what the implications of that are for a believing Christian. His "education" went through three phases, as investigator, as participant, and finally as disciple: (1) attending lectures and worship services, reading tracts and scriptures, at one of the fifty centers for Oriental spirituality in Cambridge, Massachusetts now renamed "Benares on the Charles"; (2) learning to "sit" at a Zen meditation center; hunting, digging, and finally eating peyote, under observation from a psychiatrist and the ancient Huichole Indians in San Luis Potosi State, in Central Mexico; (3) teaching and meditating with Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Tibetan Buddhist, scholar, and founder of Naropa Institute, in Boulder, Colorado. Later, by way of comparison, Cox visited and chanted with the monks at the Benedictine Priory in Weston, Vermont, rediscovering in his own heritage elements of spirituality that he had previously neglected. Each of these experiences is described in successive chapters, with perceptive commentary on American life and reflections on the history of Jewish and Christian spirituality, along the way.

A discussion of Buddhism, for example, leads into a commentary on the limitations of Western psychology, with its emphasis upon "the ego, the id, the psyche, the secret-me-inside—with only peripheral interest directed toward the integral enmeshment of the self in its society, the cosmos, and the immense traceries within which it lives." Similarly, a discussion of the value of meditation is followed by a lament for the loss of "the idea of the Sabbath or a stated time to cease, to do nothing, to allow what is to be" and a call for a patient rethinking of the Western tradition, where the functional equivalents of meditation periodically appear.

After looking at the fifteen-year-old neo-Oriental movement, within the history of our long fascination with the "mysterious East," Cox makes this final judgment: "The greed of an acquisitive society and the pace of industrial production have created a mindset in which a pale, spiritually uprooted Orientalism is bound to have an appeal." But the Eastern path accommodates itself to America by ignoring much that is valuable in the Western ethical and religious tradition and by sacrificing what is most elemental to Oriental religions as well.

Appropriating what he can, Cox makes, nonetheless, some concrete suggestions for an authentic spirituality, based upon concepts familiar to East and West and upon a recognition of the wisdom of both traditions: the need for sangha and friendship, and, by implication, for congregation; the need for dharma and gospel—not for dogma, that is, but for a direct en-

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counter or relationship with another person's life, through story; and the need for Jesus—guru and teacher—as one who is able to impart spiritual guidance, because he or she has been through the process already.

The search for true spirituality is, of course, resisted by almost every force in our society and even by the church itself. "The business of America is business," Cox says, "and that includes the religion business." In the midst of this confusion, he preaches biblical faith and "grace," defined here as the possibility of change. For Americans, it involves giving up our personal and national quest for economic supremacy, based upon profit, and for military invulnerability, based upon the threat of mutual annihilation. As guides, we have the example of people from two historical periods with particular relevance to our own: (a) the first Christians, whose pre-Christian culture resembles our own post-Christian era; and (b) the generation immediately preceding ours, which produced its own great models for spirituality: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Simone Weil, Dorothy Day, Camilo Torres, Martin Luther King. "They know about Darwin, Freud, Marx, contraception, imperialism, and ennui.

RELIGIOUS PUBLISHING

JOHN GARVEY

Religious publishing has fallen on bad times.

I've worked in religious publishing for several years and have seen good and bad things happen, but during the last couple of years I think we've begun to see the bottom. Good things are, to be sure, being published: John Dunne, Henri Nouwen, and Rosemary Haughton (to name three very different, very good writers) continue to do exciting work, and in almost any decent bookstore you can find something by C. S. Lewis or Thomas Merton. But every now and then I come across items that make me want to gag. If they represent the future of religious publishing, I want to get into something more honest, like child porn.

I'm thinking of a couple of trends. One is the cute approach to God. I thought Matthew Fox, O.P., had hit a new low in this department with *On Becoming a Musical Mystical Bear* (Harper), but then he outdid himself with *WHEE! We, wee, All the Way Home*, which is subtitled *A Guide to the New Sensual Spirituality* (Consortium Books). Fox is predictably trendy—he doesn't like asceticism or dichotomies, he tells us—and in WHEE, etc., he has written what his publishers modestly describe as "an 'Imitation of Christ' for the Age of Aquarius." Considering the fact that this age has also given us Farrah Fawcett Majors dolls, leisure suits, and *est*, it may be the Imitation we deserve. *Vow, God*, by Sister Francis Clare (New Leaf Press) is a Pentecostal number in which, according to the publishers, "the enigma that has been the Catholic nun is unraveled in one gutsy, anointed, authentic story—warm, personable, challenging." (I imagine unraveling a nun *would* be gutsy). And Paulist press recently published the sickeningly titled *T.S.K.H.: Tickle, Snuggle, Kiss, Hug*, by Betty May, a book about relating to your kids.

That is one trend. The other is the boom in born-again publishing. I don't mean to lump all evangelical writers together; it can't be done, and any generalization will founder on a number of honorable exceptions. But it used to be that only a few celebrities (Pat Boone and Anita Bryant, to name a couple) cashed in on this market. Now it's a scramble. Bert Lance's wife LaBelle—really! It's true!—has written *This Too Shall Pass* (Christian Herald Press). Sample copy: "We have had to suffer, but I trust that my story will show the vibrancy of life, rather than the evil. I'd like you to walk with me down the Lance road of life." Logos International has just published a book about Larry Flynt's alleged conversion, by evangelist Larry Jones, entitled *Hustler for the Lord*.

I don't suggest that the cute titles and the born-again books are published by people whose sole concern is the fast buck; but even if these things can be put down to a simple lapse in taste, it is a lapse so severe that it presents a moral problem. The cute titles are the result of domesticated religion: get it down to a cozy level, make God a buddy. This is probably what comes of having been so constantly exposed to the words of the Bible that they lose their strangeness, which can be glorious and terrifying at once, but never cute, or familiar. The born-again books, despite their frequent nods in the direction of Pentecost, also espouse a form of religion which is hardly likely to transform anything more substantial than a mood. The promise of the Bible gets whittled down to a success story: some crooked pol or fame-crazed celebrity gets saved and stops drinking and horsing around—that's what Jesus is for. There is even a Christian weight loss plan out there somewhere, but I don't have the heart to look it up. The trendy end of the spectrum baptizes all the current therapies, politics, and ideologies, while the born-again end baptizes our culture's right-wing leanings, with in-

JOHN GARVEY, *the author of* Saints for Confused Times *(Thomas More Press), is an editor with Templegate.*

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Their lives span not some idealized past, but our own fractured times. They carry all the alleged handicaps to belief that we do, yet they manage to be Christians."

A book that begins, in other words, as a modest treatise on a contemporary religious phenomenon, the post-sixties turn toward neo-Orientalism, ends with an eloquent plea for American Christians to change their ways—to put their spiritual lives on the line, if not in the lion's den. What gives it a particular force is the manner of presentation, one that may be familiar to readers of Cox's *The Seduction of the Spirit: The Use and Misuse of People's Religion* (1973). It is an eclectic style, combining journalistic survey and personal commentary, theological reflection and critical evaluation. The text reads at times like a good novel or a convincing autobiography, never slick or "confessional," in the maudlin style that has come to dominate much religious writing, never vague or sentimental, even in his descriptions of intense religious experience. In turning East, Cox respects what he cannot be a part of, and acknowledges what he cannot fully understand. As investigator and critic, he is not condescending, even in making severe judgments, so that one accepts his testimony and even his lay sermons as elements of a real life. Critical, yet sympathetic, firm in his indictment of the inanities of the counter culture, yet attentive to what that culture says about the context in which it grew, Cox has written one of the best books I know on contemporary America.

dividualism transferred from economics to salvation.

This isn't the first time religion has been used to bless the status quo, or the first time churchpeople have been seduced by the spirit of the present age; that problem is always with us. What is new about this is that it sells so well now, and it isn't meeting with much resistance. Large secular publishing companies were inclined to wave away the evangelical market until the past few years. Then they saw some sales figures which gave them a sudden respect for all those bright-eyed people with Praise the Lord bumper stickers.

The fact that such books sell well encourages speculation that America is becoming a religious nation. There is a smarmy feeling on the part of some churchpeople that anything which interests people in religion has to have *some* merit. (Remember some of the silly things people said about *The Exorcist*? "If we can get them to believe in the devil, that's the first step. . .")

But what is happening is not that the nation is becoming religious. On the contrary, religion is becoming one more American product, sold like everything else on the market; and the way it is sold determines what people feel about it. In fact, it is possible to make a false idol and call it God. It is possible to reduce Jesus by making him fit our sense of life. Religious publishing, and evangelical television shows, are the two areas in which this sort of idolatry is most obvious.

What is terrible about this? Are publishers of religious books finally expected to be different, in making decisions about what directions their lists should take, from any other publisher? Well, yes and no. I am uncomfortable, when I read a magazine like *Christian Bookseller* or talk to the owner of an evangelical bookstore and hear the business referred to as "a ministry." Profit is involved, and must be—at least enough to enable a firm to continue. Subsidized religious publishing has not generally offered hospitality to new and independent religious thinking. But at the same time, there really must be some fear and trembling involved. The language we are charged with as Christians can't be made to fit any purpose we want, and to be careless or callous about it simply debases it.

I know one response I might get to this, from either the trendy-cute corner or the born-again one. I've heard it before. Someone with wet lips and a goofy stare says, "You're scared"—either of "the new" or of "what the Lord is doing in our age." No, that isn't it. What *would* scare me would be getting to heaven and finding out that God is an activities director on an endless sea cruise, or that the Holy Spirit acts like Ed McMahon on the Tonight Show. That's the weird little religion both these trends encourage. I'm afraid somebody might mistake it for Christianity.

Chopin

BERNARD GAVOTY

Scribner's, $14.95 [452 pp]

ROY CHERNUS

It is perhaps inevitable that our responses to Frederic Chopin's music should be conditioned by the social-psychological matrix of his life. (Decidedly not the case with Bach's or Stravinsky's music, for example.) For so constricted was Chopin by his effeminacy and neurasthenia that he dared not act upon any sexual or patriotic impulses, but rather sublimated them in his music.

Although he hated letter-writing, this too helped disburden Chopin of otherwise repressed emotions. Deprived of the insights into his strangely inverted relationship with George Sand which her letters to Chopin would surely have revealed (she destroyed them), we still have his suggestive correspondence with Polish compatriot Tytus Woyciechowski. To the gentleman biographers of Chopin like Casimir Wierzynski and Arthur Hedley the torrid homosexual sentiments of these letters have been an embarrassment which they implausibly explained away as a transferral of his frustrated love for Konstancja

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Gladkowska to Tytus or as a misleading translation of the "highly colored" Polish.

There are also some curious omissions in the Sydow-Hedley edition of Chopin letters (present in the older Opienski-Voynich edition, however) such as the following from the October 5, 1830 letter to Tytus: ". . . Give me a kiss, dearest beloved; I know that you still care for me, but I'm always so afraid of you—as if you were some sort of tyrant over me; I don't know why I'm afraid of you. God knows it's only you that have power over me, you and—no one else. . . ." which indicates that Chopin's simultaneous love for Konstancja, hopelessly idealized, was superficial and inconsequential indeed. Herbert Weinstock, who in his biography insists that Chopin was never overtly conscious of any homosexual inclinations, concedes that this passage is "one of the most shadowed glimpses into his ambivalent emotions."

In the present biography, M. Gavoty rightly affirms that Chopin loved Konstancja "Not as a woman, but as a shadow or, rather, as an idea, as an excuse for music and nostalgia." (Just as he in fact loved Poland, for all the legends to the contrary.) But, like earlier biographers, Gavoty forcibly links this extreme mother-figure idealization with Chopin's fierce possessiveness of Tytus as indicated in the September 18, 1830 letter: ". . . I know that I love you in vain—I should like you to love me more each time; that is why I scribble on so much paper. . . . You are not the master of your thoughts—I am. And I won't let you abandon me. . . . Give me your mouth, to end this letter. . . ." Unfortunately, this and all of Chopin's other confessions to Tytus remain ultimately "mysterious" to M. Gavoty.

Every biography of Chopin I have read, including M. Gavoty's, has evaded or denied his crucial homosexuality and dandy-aesthete sensibility. The whole question of these prominent traits in the lives and music of so many composers has been virtually ignored by musical scholars. The especially marked dandyism in nineteenth-century French literature and twentieth-century British literature has been illuminated in Ellen Moers's *The Dandy* and Martin Green's *Children of the Sun*, among other excellent cultural-psychological studies, and there is at least as prevalent a tradition of dandyism in music. And as Mr. Green has shown, French high culture, in which milieu Chopin lived and worked most happily, was from the early nineteenth century on dominated by almost overt homosexuals like Balzac, Gautier, Sainte-Beuve, and de Musset, all intimates of George Sand.

From the start of their ten-year affair, George Sand was almost exclusively a nurse-mother to Chopin—as she had previously been to Jules Sandeau and Alfred de Musset—rather than a lover, and her concurrent lesbian affair with the actress Marie Dorval has long been recognized by French scholars. Indeed, the parts of Sand's *Intimate Journal* devoted to Marie are as impassioned as Chopin's expressions to Tytus, and the women's relationship was probably the most fulfilling of Sand's life. André Maurois has suggested in his biography of Sand that Chopin and Delacroix, both sensitive, aristocratic dandies, were much closer to each other than to Sand, and Chopin's letters indicate that the two spent a great deal of time together.

Evidently, Chopin and Sand each lived mainly in the worlds of their own fictions throughout their relationship, and they separated when Chopin acquiesced in Solange Sand's challenge to her mother as the center of control and love. But Solange proved to be no strong protectress like George, whom Chopin so desperately needed for stability against the impinging reality

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REVIEWERS

FATHER GERARD REEDY, S.J., teaches English at Fordham University.

MICHAEL TRUE is professor of English at Assumption College in Worcester, Mass.

ROY A. CHERNUS is a free-lance writer and critic specializing in music.

FATHER JOHN B. SHEERIN, C.S.P., is with the Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington.

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around him culminating in the revolution of 1848.

M. Gavoty's chatty biography evokes only superficially the sexual and spiritual flux that Chopin, George Sand, and their contemporaries could never resolve, and that inevitably left its mark upon their arts. About Chopin's music M. Gavoty offers only the most flatulent rhapsodizing—hardly attributable to Martin Sokolinsky's translation, I would think.

IN BRIEF

RELIGION AND THE AMERICAN DREAM: *The Search for Freedom Under God, by Christopher F. Mooney, S.J., Westminster*, $4.95. [132 pp]

This volume is a collection of talks presented by Father Mooney at the Bicentennial Lectures at St. Joseph's College, Philadelphia, 1975-76. The central theme is the need of adapting the original American dream of freedom to the collective aspirations of the global community. That early concept of "a new order of the ages" focused on the personal freedoms of the individual but the pressure of history is today involving Americans in "a socializing process of planetary proportions." The Constitution recognizes rights such as freedom of speech, press and assembly but the Third World, for instance, is asking for goods and services, e.g., food and health care. Mooney speaks with guarded optimism about the possibility of this transformation but sees signs that we are negotiating some transitions to a sense of global responsibility.

The author speaks from a broad knowledge of American legal history as well as the tumultuous history of our time, with occasional references to Teilhard de Chardin's expansive views of developing global consciousness. Incisive, at times inspiring, this lively book should strike sparks in the American conscience, awakening it to the fact we are living in a social revolution yet regarded by many as the leading counterrevolutionary force of the century.

In a later volume, perhaps, Father Mooney might discuss in greater detail the need of communicating to the Third World our human rights traditions of First Amendment protections against government. As one speaker at the W.C.C. meeting at Nairobi in 1975 said, why have so many African leaders held power for 20 years without elections and why have so many refugees fled "independent" African countries?

JOHN B. SHEERIN

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 259)

free us from the self-concern that leads to aggression and prevents us from loving and how important it is for love to answer our needs in order to free us from self-concern, may I suggest that Jesus's uniqueness lies in his extraordinary intuitive sensitivity to the feelings of others and to the kind of loving action necessary to free them from their need for self-concern. Many of us have experienced this kind of intuitive sensitivity in at least one relationship, but Jesus's life indicates that his intuitive knowledge or awareness was inordinately accurate for all men and women to a degree not possessed by ordinary humans. Such perfect loving effectively frees us from the self-concern that prevents us from obeying God's command to love and leads us to aggression or sin. Perhaps it is in this sense that Jesus frees us from sin. Perhaps this is how faith in Jesus's love for us supported by the loving actions of his followers can save us all from sin. Perhaps to be Christian, all we really need to understand about the incarnation is that God's perfect loving was miraculously embodied in Jesus to give us a living, tangible, human example of the potential for love God created in all of us when he created mankind

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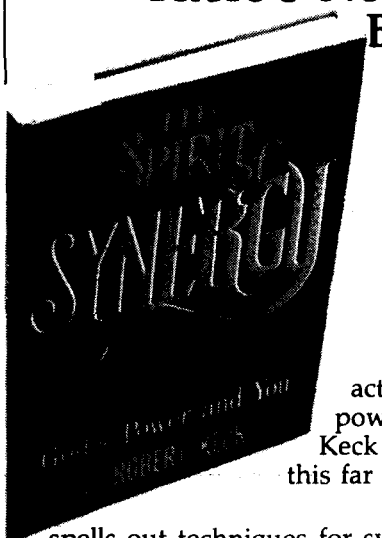

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in His image, a potential we fail to achieve in life because, like Eve, our doubts of God's loving concern for us prevent us from overcoming our self-concern. But it is a potential that Jesus's firm conviction of his unique relationship with God, a conviction given him by Mary's account of his virginal conception, enabled him to fulfill completely to the point of giving his life that all mankind might believe in God's loving concern, and through his resurrection believe in Jesus as the fully human image of God's love, an image in which all mankind was created.

Scholars offer varying explanations for the fact that Jesus obeyed Mary's request to turn water into wine at the wedding feast, performing his first public miracle for a seemingly superficial reason because Mary requested it. Perhaps the explanation is simply that Mary, as the source of Jesus's belief in his divine mission, in a sense challenged Jesus to prove his powers to himself in a situation that could not harm others, regardless of the outcome, which was not true of the Devil's challenges.

This approach to the incarnation is based on the view of a creating God of love: a God who created mankind with the capacity to love and the freedom to choose to love or not to love; and when man chose not to love, God picked one group and gave them commandments to guide them to avoid aggression and choose love. And when the purpose of his commandments was being distorted by legalistic interpretations that threatened to thwart God's guidance, God sent Jesus to guide them by example to the way of love. But this special guidance does not mean that God has spoken only through the Judeo-Christian tradition. The way of love is open to all mankind and the love that frees us from self-concern is extended to all mankind through the loving actions of their fellowmen, made possible by God's gift of the capacity and freedom to love to all mankind. God speaks to all mankind through mankind's sensitivity to the needs of others, sometimes more effectively than through the Judeo-Christian tradition as it has sometimes been interpreted and applied by its followers.

Simplistic? Perhaps.

MARILYN KRAMER

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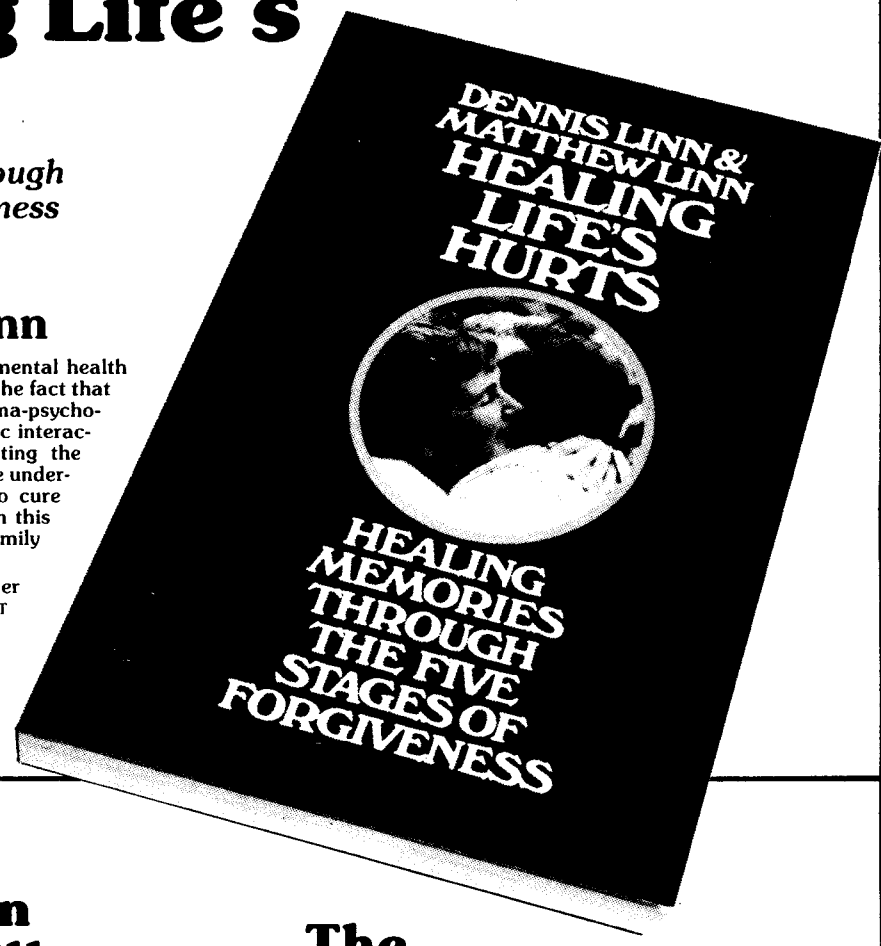

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